CHRONICLES

OF

THE CANONGATE.

Second Series.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "WAVERLEY," &c.

SIC ITUR AD ASTRA.

Motto of the Canongate Arms.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER I.

We must now leave the lower parties in our historical drama, to attend to the incidents which took place among those of a higher rank and greater importance.

We pass from the hut of an armourer, to the council-room of a monarch; and resume our story just when, the tumult beneath being settled, the angry chieftains were summoned to the royal presence. They entered, displeased with and lowering upon each other, each so ex-

clusively filled with his own fancied injuries, as to be equally unwilling and unable to attend to reason or argument. Albany alone, calm and crafty, seemed prepared to use their dissatisfaction for his own purposes, and turn each incident as it should occur to the furtherance of his own indirect ends.

The King's irresolution, although it amounted even to timidity, did not prevent his assuming the exterior appearance of dignity becoming his situation. It was only when hard pressed, as in the preceding scene, that he lost his apparent composure. In general, he might be driven from his purpose, but seldom from his dignity of manner. He received Albany, Douglas, March, and the Prior, (those ill-assorted members of his motley council,) with a mixture of courtesy and dignity, which reminded each haughty peer that he stood in the presence of his Sovereign, and compelled him to do the beseeming reverence.

Having received their salutations, the King motioned them to be seated; and they were obeying his commands when Rothsay entered.

He walked gracefully up to his father, and, kneeling at his footstool, requested his blessing. Robert, with a look in which fondness and sorrow were ill disguised, made an attempt to assume a look of reproof, as he laid his hand on the youth's head, and said, with a sigh, "God bless thee, my thoughtless boy, and make thee a wiser man in thy future years!"

"Amen, my dearest father!" said Rothsay, in a tone of feeling such as his happier moments often evinced. He then kissed the royal hand, with the reverence of a son and a subject; and instead of taking a place at the council board, remained standing behind the King's chair, in such a position that he might, when he chose, whisper into his father's ear.

The King then made a sign to the Prior of St Dominic to take his place at the table, on which there were writing materials, which, of all the subjects present, Albany excepted, the churchman was alone able to use. The King then opened the purpose of their meeting, by saying, with much dignity,

"Our business, my lords, respected these

unhappy dissensions in the Highlands, which, we learn by our latest messengers, are about to occasion the waste and destruction of the country, even within a few miles of this our own court. But near as this trouble is, our ill fate, and the instigations of wicked men, have raised up one yet nearer, by throwing strife and contention among the citizens of Perth and those attendants who follow your lordships, and others our knights and nobles. I must first, therefore, apply to yourselves, my lords, to know why our court is disturbed by such unseemly contendings, and by what means they ought to be repressed?—Brother of Albany, do you tell us first your sentiments on this matter."

"Sir, our royal Sovereign and brother," said the Duke, "being in attendance on your person when the fray began, I am not acquainted with its origin."

"And for me," said the Prince, "I heard no worse war-cry than a minstrel wench's ballad, and saw no more dangerous bolts flying than hazel nuts."

"And I," said the Earl of March, "could only

perceive that the stout citizens of Perth had in chase some knaves who had assumed the Bloody Heart on their shoulders. They ran too fast to be actually the men of the Earl of Douglas."

Douglas understood the sneer, but only replied to it by one of those withering looks with which he was accustomed to intimate his mortal resentment. He spoke, however, with haughty composure.

"My liege," he said, "must of course know it is Douglas who must answer to this heavy charge; for when was there strife or bloodshed in Scotland, but there were foul tongues to asperse a Douglas or a Douglas's man, as having given cause to them? We have here goodly witnesses. I speak not of my Lord of Albany, who has only said that he was, as well becomes him, by your Grace's side. And I say nothing of my Lord of Rothsay, who, as befits his rank, years, and understanding, was cracking nuts with a strolling musician.—He smiles—Here he may say his pleasure—I shall not forget a tie which he seems to have forgotten. But here

is my Lord of March, who saw my followers flying before the clowns of Perth! I can tell that Earl, that the followers of the Bloody Heart advance or retreat, when their chieftain commands, and the good of Scotland requires."

"And I can answer—" exclaimed the equally proud Earl of March, his blood rushing into his face, when the King interrupted him.

"Peace! angry lords," said the King, "and remember in whose presence you stand!—And you, my Lord of Douglas, tell us, if you can, the cause of this mutiny, and why your followers, whose general good services we are most willing to acknowledge, were thus active in private brawl?"

"I obey, my lord," said Douglas, slightly stooping a head that seldom bent. "I was passing from my lodgings in the Carthusian Convent, through the High Street of Perth, with a few of my ordinary retinue, when I beheld some of the baser sort crowding around the Cross, against which there were nailed this placard, and that which accompanies it."

He took from a pocket in the bosom of his

buff-coat, a human hand and a piece of parchment. The King was shocked and agitated.

"Read," he said, "good Father Prior, and let that ghastly spectacle be removed."

The Prior read a placard to the following purpose:—

"Inasmuch as the house of a citizen of Perth was assaulted last night, being St Valentine's Eve, by a sort of disorderly night-walkers, belonging to some company of the strangers now resident in the Fair City: And whereas, this hand was struck from one of the lawless limmers in the fray that ensued, the Provost and Magistrates have directed that it should be nailed to the Cross, in scorn and contempt of those by whom such brawl was occasioned. And if any one of knightly degree shall say that this our act is wrongfully done, I, Patrick Charteris of Kinfauns, knight, will justify this cartel in knightly weapons, within the barrace; or, if any one of meaner birth shall deny what is here said, he shall be met with by a citizen of the Fair City of Perth, according to his degree. And so God and St John protect the Fair City!"

"You will not wonder, my lord," resumed Douglas, "that when my almoner had read to me the contents of so insolent a scroll, I caused one of my squires to pluck down a trophy so disgraceful to the chivalry and nobility of Scotland. Whereupon, it seems some of these saucy burghers took license to hoot and insult the hindmost of my train, who wheeled their horses on them, and would soon have settled the feud, but for my positive command that they should follow me in as much peace as the rascally vulgar would permit. And thus they arrived here in the guise of flying men, when, with my command to repel force by force, they might have set fire to the four corners of this wretched borough, and stifled the insolent churls, like fox-cubs in a burning brake of furze."

There was a silence when Douglas had done speaking, until the Duke of Rothsay answered, addressing his father—

"Since the Earl of Douglas possesses the power of burning the town where your Grace holds your court, so soon as the Provost and he differ about a night riot, or the terms of a

cartel, I am sure we ought all to be thankful that he has not the will to do so."

"The Duke of Rothsay," said Douglas, who seemed resolved to maintain command of his temper, "may have reason to thank Heaven in a more serious tone than he now uses, that the Douglas is as true as he is powerful. This is a time when the subjects in all countries rise against the law; we have heard of the insurgents of the Jacquerie in France; and of Jack Straw, and Hob Miller, and Parson Ball, among the Southron, and we may be sure there is fuel enough to catch such a flame, were it spreading to our frontiers. When I see peasants challenging noblemen, and nailing the hands of the gentry to their city Cross, I will not say I *fear* mutiny—for that would be false—but I foresee, and will stand well prepared for it."

"And why does my Lord Douglas say," answered the Earl of March, "that this cartel has been done by churls? I see Sir Patrick Charteris' name there, and he, I ween, is of no churl's blood. The Douglas himself, since he

takes the matter so warmly, might lift Sir Patrick's gauntlet without soiling of his honour."

"My Lord of March," replied Douglas, "should speak but of what he understands. I do no injustice to the descendant of the Red Rover, when I say he is too slight to be weighed with the Douglas. The heir of Thomas Randolph might have a better claim to be answered."

"And, by my honour, it shall not miss for want of my asking the grace," said the Earl of March, pulling his glove off.

"Stay, my lord," said the King. "Do us not so gross an injury as to bring your feud to mortal defiance here; but rather offer your ungloved hand in kindness to the noble Earl, and embrace, in token of your mutual fealty to the crown of Scotland."

"Not so, my liege," answered March; "your Majesty may command me to return my gauntlet, for that and all the armour it belongs to are at your command, while I continue to hold my Earldom of the crown of Scotland—but when I clasp Douglas, it must be with a mailed hand.

Farewell, my liege. My counsels here avail not, and those of others are so favourably received, that perhaps farther stay were unwholesome for my safety. May God keep your Highness from open enemies and treacherous friends!—I am for my Castle of Dunbar, from whence I think you will soon hear news. Farewell to you, my Lords of Albany and Douglas; you are playing a high game, look you play it fairly—Farewell, poor thoughtless Prince, who art sporting like a fawn within spring of a tiger!—Farewell all—George of Dunbar sees the evil he cannot remedy.—Adieu, all."

The King would have spoken, but the accents died on his tongue, as he received from Albany a look cautioning him to forbear. The Earl of March left the apartment, receiving the mute salutations of the members of the council whom he had severally addressed, excepting from Douglas alone, who returned to his farewell speech a glance of contemptuous defiance.

"The recreant goes to betray us to the Southron," he said; "his pride rests on his possessing that sea-worn Hold which can ad-

mit the English into Lothian.—Nay, look not alarmed, my liege, I will hold good what I say —nevertheless, it is yet time. Speak but the word, my liege—say but, 'Arrest him,' and March shall not yet cross the Earn on his traitorous journey."

"Nay, gallant Earl," said Albany, who wished rather that the two powerful lords should counterbalance each other, than that one should obtain a decisive superiority, "that were too hasty counsel. The Earl of March came hither on the King's warrant of safe-conduct, and it may not consist with my royal brother's honour to break it. Yet, if your lordship can bring any detailed proof——"

Here they were interrupted by a flourish of trumpets.

"His Grace of Albany is unwontedly scrupulous to-day," said Douglas; "but it skills not wasting words—the time is past—these are March's trumpets, and I warrant me he rides at flight-speed so soon as he passes the South Port. We shall hear of him in time; and if it be as I have conjectured, he shall be met with though all England backed his treachery."

"Nay, let us hope better of the noble Earl of March," said the King, no way displeased that the quarrel betwixt March and Douglas had seemed to obliterate the traces of the disagreement betwixt Rothsay and his father-in-law; "he hath a fiery, but not a sullen temper —In some things he has been—I will not say wronged—but disappointed—and something is to be allowed to the resentment of high blood armed with great power. But thank Heaven, all of us who remain are of one sentiment and of one house; so that, at least, our councils cannot now be thwarted with disunion.—Father Prior, I pray you take your writing materials, for you must as usual be our clerk of council.—And now to business, my lords—and our first object of consideration must be this Highland cumber."

"Between the Clan Chattan and the Clan Quhele, or Kay," said the Prior; "which, as our last advices from our brethren at Dunkeld inform us, is ready to break out into a more formidable warfare than has yet taken place between these sons of Belial, who speak of no-

thing else than of utterly destroying one another. Their forces are assembling on each side, and not a man, claiming in the tenth degree of kindred, but must repair to the Brattach* of his tribe, or stand to the punishment of fire and sword. The fiery cross hath fled like a meteor in every direction, and awakened strange and unknown tribes beyond the distant Murray Firth—may Heaven and St Dominic be our protection! But if your lordships cannot find remedy for evil, it will spread broad and wide, and the patrimony of the Church must in every direction be exposed to the fury of these Amalekites, with whom there is as little devotion to Heaven, as there is pity or love to their neighbours—may Our Lady be our guard! —We hear some of them are yet utter heathens, and worship Mahound and Termagaunt."

"My lords and kinsmen," said Robert, "ye have heard the urgency of this case, and may

* Standard—literally, cloth. The Lowland language still retains the word *brat*, which, however, is only applicable to a child's pinafore, or a coarse towel. To such mean offices may words descend.

desire to know my sentiments before you deliver what your own wisdom shall suggest. And, in sooth, no better remedy occurs to me, than to send two commissioners, with full power from us to settle such debates as be among them; and at the same time to charge them, as they shall be answerable to the law, to lay down their arms, and forbear all practices of violence against each other."

"I approve of your Grace's proposal," said Rothsay; "and I trust the good Prior will not refuse the venerable station of envoy upon this peace-making errand. And his reverend brother, the Abbot of the Carthusian convent, must contend for an honour which will certainly add two most eminent recruits to the large army of martyrs, since the Highlanders little regard the distinction betwixt clerk and layman, in the ambassadors whom you send to them."

"My royal Lord of Rothsay," said the Prior, "if I am destined to the blessed crown of martyrdom, I shall be doubtless directed to the path by which I am to attain it. Meantime, if you

speak in jest, may Heaven pardon you, and give you light to perceive that it were better buckle on your arms to guard the possessions of the Church, so perilously endangered, than to employ your wit in taunting her ministers and servants."

"I taunt no one, Father Prior," said the youth, yawning; "nor have I much objection to taking arms, excepting that they are a somewhat cumbrous garb, and in February a furred mantle is more suiting the weather than a steel corslet. And it irks me the more to put on cold harness in this nipping weather, that, would but the Church send a detachment of their saints, (and they have some Highland ones well known in this district, and doubtless used to the climate,) they might fight their own battles, like merry St George of England. But I know not how it is, we hear of their miracles when they are propitiated, and of their vengeance, if any one trespasses on their patrimonies, and these are urged as reasons for extending their lands by large largesses; and yet

if there come down but a band of twenty Highlanders, bell, book, and candle make no speed, and the belted baron must be fain to maintain the Church in possession of the lands which he has given to her, as much as if he himself still enjoyed the fruits of them."

"Son Robert," said his father, "you give an undue license to your tongue."

"Nay, sir, I am mute," replied the Prince. "I had no purpose to disturb your Highness, or displease the Father Prior, who, with so many miracles at his disposal, will not face, as it seems, a handful of Highland catherans."

"We know," said the Prior, with suppressed indignation, "from what source these vile doctrines are derived, which we hear with horror from the tongue of your Highness. When princes converse with heretics, their minds and manners are alike corrupted. They show themselves in the streets as the companions of maskers and harlots, and in the council as the scorners of the Church and of holy things."

"Peace, good Father!" said the King. "Rothsay shall make amends for what he has

idly spoken. Alas! let us take counsel in friendly fashion, rather than resemble a mutinous crew of mariners in a sinking vessel, when each is more intent on quarrelling with his neighbours, than in assisting the exertions of the forlorn master for the safety of the ship.—My Lord of Douglas, your house has been seldom to lack, when the crown of Scotland desired either wise counsel or manly achievement; I trust you will help us in this strait?"

"I can only wonder that the strait should exist, my lord," answered the haughty Douglas. "When I was intrusted with the lieutenancy of the kingdom, there were some of these wild clans came down from the Grampians. I troubled not the council about the matter, but made the Sheriff, Lord Ruthven, get to horse with the forces of the Carse—the Hays, the Lindsays, the Ogilvies, and other gentlemen. By St Bride! when it was steel coat to frieze mantle, the thieves knew what lances were good for, and whether swords had edges or no. There were some three hundred of their best bonnets, besides that of their chief,

Donald Cormac,* left on the moor of Thorn, and in Rochinroy Wood; and as many were gibbeted at Houghman Stairs, which has still the name from the hangman work that was done there. This is the way men deal with thieves in my country; and if gentler methods will succeed better with these Earish knaves, do not blame Douglas for speaking his mind.—You smile, my Lord of Rothsay. May I ask how I have a second time become your jest, before I have replied to the first which you passed on me?"

"Nay, be not wrathful, my good Lord of Douglas," answered the Prince; "I did but smile to think how your princely retinue would dwindle, if every thief were dealt with as the poor Highlanders at Houghman Stairs."

The King again interfered, to prevent the Earl from giving an angry reply. "Your lordship," said he to Douglas, "advises wisely that we should trust to arms when these men come out against our subjects on the fair and level plain;

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* Some authorities place this skirmish so late as 1443.

but the difficulty is to put a stop to their disorders while they continue to lurk within their mountains. I need not tell you that the Clan Chattan, and the Clan Kay, are great confederacies, consisting each of various tribes, who are banded together, each to support their own separate league, and who of late have had dissensions which have drawn blood wherever they have met, whether individually or in bands. The whole country is torn to pieces by their restless feuds."

"I cannot see the evil of this," said the Douglas; "the ruffians will destroy each other, and the deer of the Highlands will increase as the men diminish. We shall gain as hunters the exercise we lose as warriors."

"Rather say that the wolves will increase as the men diminish," replied the King.

"I am content," said Douglas; "better wild wolves than wild Highlanders. Let there be strong forces maintained along the Highland frontier, to separate the quiet from the disturbed country. Confine the fire of civil war within the Highlands; let it spend its uncontrolled

fury, and it will be soon burnt out for want of fuel. The survivors will be humbled, and will be more obedient to a whisper of your Grace's pleasure, than their fathers, or the knaves that now exist, have been to your strictest commands."

"This is wise but ungodly counsel," said the Prior, shaking his head; "I cannot take it upon my conscience to recommend it. It is wisdom, but it is the wisdom of Achitophel, crafty at once and cruel."

"My heart tells me so—" said Robert, laying his hand on his breast; "my heart tells me, that it will be asked of me at the awful day, 'Robert Stewart, where are the subjects I have given thee?' it tells me, that I must account for them all, Saxon and Gael, Lowland, Highland, and Border man; that I will not be required to answer for those alone who have wealth and knowledge, but for those also who were robbers because they were poor, and rebels because they were ignorant."

"Your Highness speaks like a Christian King," said the Prior; "but you bear the

sword as well as the sceptre, and this present evil is of a kind which the sword must cure."

"Hark ye, my lords," said the Prince, looking up as if a gay thought had suddenly struck him,—"Suppose we teach these savage mountaineers a strain of chivalry? It were no hard matter to bring these two great commanders, the captain of the Clan Chattan, and the chief of the no less doughty race of the Clan Quhele, to defy each other to mortal combat. They might fight here in Perth—we would lend them horse and armour: thus their feud would be stanched by the death of one, or probably both, of the villains, (for I think both would break their necks in the first charge,) my father's godly desire of saving blood would be attained, and we should have the pleasure of seeing such a combat between two salvage knights, for the first time in their lives wearing breeches, and mounted on horses, as has not been heard of since the days of King Arthur."

"Shame upon you, son Robert!" said the King. "Do you make the distress of your na-

tive country, and the perplexity of our councils, a subject for buffoonery?"

"If you will pardon me, royal brother," said Albany, "I think, that though my princely nephew hath started this thought in a jocular manner, there may be something wrought out of it, which might greatly remedy this pressing evil."

"Good brother," replied the King, "it is unkind to expose Rothsay's folly by pressing further his ill-timed jest. We know the Highland clans have not our customs of chivalry, nor the habit or mode of doing battle which these require."

"True, royal brother," answered Albany; "yet I speak not in scorn, but in serious earnest. True, the mountaineers have not our forms and mode of doing battle in the lists, but they have those which are as effectual to the destruction of human life; and so that the mortal game is played, and the stake won and lost, what signifies it whether these Gael fight with sword and lance, as becomes belted knights, or with sand-bags, like the crestless churls of England, or butcher

each other with knives and skeans, in their own barbarous fashion? Their habits, like our own, refer all disputed rights and claims to the decision of battle. They are as vain, too, as they are fierce; and the idea that these two clans would be admitted to combat in presence of your Grace and of your court, will readily induce them to refer their difference to the fate of battle, even were such rough arbitrement less familiar to their customs, and that in any such numbers as shall be thought most convenient. We must take care that they approach not the court, save in such a fashion and number that they shall not be able to surprise us; and that point being provided against, the more that shall be admitted to combat upon either side, the greater will be the slaughter among their bravest and most stirring men, and the more the chance of the Highlands being quiet for some time to come."

"This were a bloody policy, brother," said the King; "and again I say, that I cannot bring my conscience to countenance the slaughter of these rude men, that are so little better than so many benighted heathens."

"And are their lives more precious," asked Albany, "than those of nobles and gentlemen who by your Grace's license are so frequently admitted to fight in barrace, either for the satisfying of disputes at law, or simply to acquire honour?"

The King, thus hard pressed, had little to say against a custom so engrafted upon the laws of the realm and the usages of chivalry, as the trial by combat; and he only replied, "God knows, I have never granted such license as you urge we with, unless with the greatest repugnance; and that I never saw men have strife together to the effusion of blood, but I could have wished to appease it with the shedding of my own."

"But, my gracious lord," said the Prior, "it seems that if we follow not some such policy as this of my Lord of Albany, we must have recourse to that of the Douglas; and, at the risk of the dubious event of battle, and with the certainty of losing many excellent subjects, do, by means of the Lowland swords, that which these wild mountaineers will otherwise perform

with their own hand.—What says my Lord of Douglas to the policy of his Grace of Albany?"

"Douglas," said the haughty lord, "never counselled that to be done by policy which might be attained by open force. He remains by his opinion, and is willing to march at the head of his own followers, with those of the Barons of Perthshire and the Carse; and either bring these Highlanders to reason or subjection, or leave the body of a Douglas among their savage wildernesses."

"It is nobly said, my Lord of Douglas," said Albany; "and well might the King rely upon thy undaunted heart, and the courage of thy resolute followers. But see you not how soon you may be called elsewhere, where your presence and services are altogether indispensable to Scotland and her Monarch? Marked you not the gloomy tone in which the fiery Earl of March limited his allegiance and faith to our Sovereign here present, to that space for which he was to remain King Robert's vassal? And did not you yourself suspect that he was plotting a transference of his allegiance to Eng-

land?—Other chiefs, of subordinate power and inferior fame, may do battle with the Highlanders; but if March admit the Percies and their Englishmen into our frontiers, who will drive them back if the Douglas be elsewhere?"

"My sword," answered Douglas, "is equally at the service of his Majesty, on the frontier, or in the deepest recesses of the Highlands. I have seen the backs of the proud Percy and George Dunbar ere now, and I may see them again. And, if it is the King's pleasure I should take measures against this probable conjunction of stranger and traitor, I admit that, rather than trust to an inferior or feebler hand the important task of settling the Highlands, I would be disposed to give my opinion in favour of the policy of my Lord of Albany, and suffer those savages to carve each other's limbs, without giving barons and knights the trouble of hunting them down."

"My Lord of Douglas," said the Prince, who seemed determined to omit no opportunity to gall his haughty father-in-law, "does not choose to leave to us Lowlanders even the poor

crumbs of honour which might be gathered at the expense of the Highland kerne, while he, with his Border chivalry, reaps the full harvest of victory over the English. But Percy hath seen men's backs as well as Douglas; and I have known as great wonders as that he who goes forth to seek such wool should come back shorn."

"A phrase," said Douglas, "well becoming a prince, who speaks of honour with a wandering harlot's scrip in his bonnet, by way of favour."

"Excuse it, my lord," said Rothsay; "men who have matched unfittingly become careless in the choice of those whom they love *par amours.* The chained dog must snatch at the nearest bone."

"Rothsay, my unhappy son!" exclaimed the King, "art thou mad? or wouldst thou draw down on thee the full storm of a king and father's displeasure?"

"I am dumb," returned the Prince, "at your Grace's command."

"Well then, my lord of Albany," said the

King, " since such is your advice, and since Scottish blood must flow, how, I pray you, are we to prevail on these fierce men to refer their quarrel to such a combat as you propose?"

" That, my liege," said Albany, " must be the result of more mature deliberation. But the task will not be difficult. Gold will be needful to bribe some of the bards, and principal counsellors and spokesmen. The chiefs, moreover, of both these leagues must be made to understand, that, unless they agree to this amicable settlement——"

" *Amicable*, Robert!" said the King, with emphasis.

" Ay, amicable, my liege," replied his brother, " since it is better the country were placed in peace, at the expense of losing a score or two of Highland kernes, than remain at war till as many thousands are destroyed by sword, fire, famine, and all the extremities of mountain battle. To return to the purpose; I think that the first party to whom the accommodation is proposed will snatch at it eagerly; that the other will be ashamed to reject an offer to

rest the cause on the swords of their bravest men; that the national vanity, and factious hate to each other, will prevent them from seeing our purpose in adopting such a rule of decision; and that they will be more eager to cut each other to pieces, than we can be to halloo them on.—And now, as our councils are finished, so far as I can aid, I will withdraw."

"Stay yet a moment," said the Prior, "for I also have a grief to disclose, of a nature so black and horrible, that your Grace's pious heart will hardly credit its existence; and I state it mournfully, because, as certain as that I am an unworthy servant of St Dominick, it is the cause of the displeasure of Heaven against this poor country; by which our victories are turned into defeat, our gladness into mourning, our councils distracted with disunion, and our country devoured by civil war."

"Speak, reverend Prior," said the King; "assuredly, if the cause of such evils be in me, or in my house, I will take instant care to their removal."

He uttered these words with a faltering

voice, and eagerly waited for the Prior's reply, in the dread, no doubt, that it might implicate Rothsay in some new charge of folly or vice. His apprehensions perhaps deceived him, when he thought he saw the churchman's eye rest for a moment on the Prince, before he said, in a solemn tone,—"Heresy, my noble and gracious liege, heresy is among us. She snatches soul after soul from the congregation, as wolves steal lambs from the sheepfold."

"There are enough of shepherds to watch the fold," answered the Duke of Rothsay. "Here are four convents of regular monks alone, around this poor hamlet of Perth, and all the secular clergy besides. Methinks a town so well garrisoned should be fit to keep out an enemy."

"One traitor in a garrison, my lord," answered the Prior, "can do much to destroy the security of a city which is guarded by legions; and if that one traitor is, either from levity, or love of novelty, or whatever other motive, protected and fostered by those who should be most eager to expel him from the fortress, his

opportunities of working mischief will be incalculably increased."

"Your words seem to aim at some one in this presence, Father Prior," said the Douglas; "if at me, they do me foul wrong. I am well aware that the Abbot of Aberbrothick hath made some ill-advised complaints, that I suffered not his beeves to become too many for his pastures, or his stock of grain to burst the girnels of the Monastery, while my followers lacked beef, and their horses corn. But bethink you, the pastures and cornfields which produced that plenty, were bestowed by my ancestors on the house of Aberbrothick, surely not with the purpose that their descendant should starve in the midst of it; and neither will he, by St Bride! But for heresy and false doctrine," he added, striking his large hand heavily on the council-table, "who is it that dare tax the Douglas? I would not have poor men burned for silly thoughts; but my hand and sword are ever ready to maintain the Christian faith."

"My lord, I doubt it not," said the Prior; "so hath it ever been with your most noble house.

For the Abbot's complaints, they may pass to a second day. But what we now desire, is a commission to some noble lord of state, joined to others of Holy Church, to support by strength of hand, if necessary, the inquiries which the reverend official of the bounds, and other grave prelates, my unworthy self being one, are about to make into the cause of the new doctrines, which are now deluding the simple, and depraving the pure and precious faith, approved by the Holy Father and his reverend predecessors."

"Let the Earl of Douglas have a royal commission to this effect," said Albany; "and let there be no exception whatever from his jurisdiction, saving the royal person. For my own part, although conscious that I have neither in act nor thought received or encouraged a doctrine which Holy Church hath not sanctioned, yet I should blush to claim an immunity under the blood royal of Scotland, lest I should seem to be seeking refuge against a crime so horrible."

"I will have nought to do with it—" said

Douglas; "to march against the English, and the Southron traitor March, is task enough for me. Moreover, I am a true Scotsman, and will not give way to aught that may put the Church of Scotland's head farther into the Roman yoke, or make the baron's coronet stoop to the mitre and cowl. Do thou, therefore, most noble Duke of Albany, place your own name in the commission; and I pray your grace so to mitigate the zeal of the men of Holy Church, who may be associated with you, that there be no over zealous dealings; for the smell of a faggot on the Tay would bring back the Douglas from the walls of York."

The Duke hastened to give the Earl assurance, that the commission should be exercised with lenity and moderation.

"Without a question," said King Robert, "the commission must be ample; and did it consist with the dignity of our crown, we would not ourselves decline its jurisdiction. But we trust, that while the thunders of the Church are directed against the vile authors of these detestable heresies, there shall be measures of

mildness and compassion taken with the unfortunate victims of their delusions.'

"Such is ever the course of Holy Church, my lord," said the Prior of St Dominic's.

"Why, then, let the commission be expedited with due care, in name of our brother Albany, and such others as shall be deemed convenient," said the King.—"And now once again let us break up our council; and, Rothsay, come thou with me, and lend me thine arm,—I have matter for thy private ear."

"Ho, la!"—exclaimed the Prince, in the tone in which he would have addressed a managed horse.

"What means this rudeness, boy?" said the King; "wilt thou never learn reason and courtesy?"

"Let me not be thought to offend, my liege," said the Prince; "but we are parting without learning what is to be done in the passing strange adventure of the dead hand, which the Douglas hath so gallantly taken up. We shall sit but uncomfortably here at Perth, if we are at variance with the citizens."

"Leave that to me," quoth Albany. "With some little grant of lands and money, and plenty of fair words, the burghers may be satisfied for this time; but it were well that the barons and their followers, who are in attendance on the court, were warned to respect the peace within burgh."

"Surely, we would have it so," said the King; "let strict orders be given accordingly."

"It is doing the churls but too much grace," said the Douglas; "but be it at your Highness's pleasure. I take leave to retire."

"Not before you taste a flagon of Gascon wine, my lord," said the King.

"Pardon," replied the Earl, "I am not athirst, and I drink not for fashion, but either for need or for friendship." So saying he departed.

The King, as if relieved by his absence, turned to Albany, and said, "And now, my lord, we should chide this truant Rothsay of ours; yet he hath served us so well at council,

that we must receive his merits as some atonement for his follies."

"I am happy to hear it," answered Albany, with a countenance of pity and incredulity, as if he knew nothing of the supposed services.

"Nay, brother, you are dull," said the King, "for I will not think you envious. Did you not note that Rothsay was the first to suggest the mode of settling the Highlands, which your experience brought indeed into better shape, and which was generally approved of—and even now we had broken up, leaving a main matter unconsidered, but that he put us in mind of the affray with the citizens?"

"I nothing doubt, my liege," said the Duke of Albany, with the acquiescence which he saw was expected, "that my royal nephew will soon emulate his father's wisdom."

"Or," said the Duke of Rothsay, "I may find it easier to borrow from another member of my family, that happy and comfortable cloak of hypocrisy which covers all vices, and then it signifies little whether they exist or not."

"My Lord Prior," said the Duke, addressing the Dominican, "we will for a moment pray your reverence's absence. The King and I have that to say to the Prince, which must have no further audience, not even yours."

The Dominican bowed and withdrew.

When the two royal brothers and the Prince were left together, the King seemed in the highest degree embarrassed and distressed; Albany sullen and thoughtful; while Rothsay himself endeavoured to cover some anxiety under his usual appearance of levity. There was a silence of a minute. At length Albany spoke.

"Royal brother," he said, "my princely nephew entertains with so much suspicion any admonition coming from my mouth, that I must pray your Grace yourself to take the trouble of telling him what it is most fitting he should know."

"It must be some unpleasing communication indeed, which my Lord of Albany cannot wrap up in honied words," said the Prince.

"Peace with thine effrontery, boy," answered the King, passionately. "You asked but

now of the quarrel with the citizens—Who caused that quarrel, Robert?—what men were those who scaled the window of a peaceful citizen and liegeman, alarmed the night with torch and outcry, and subjected our subjects to danger and affright?"

"More fear than danger, I fancy," answered the Prince; "but how can I tell the men who made this nocturnal disturbance?"

"There was a follower of thine own there," continued the King; "a man of Belial, whom I will have brought to condign punishment."

"I have no follower, to my knowledge, capable of deserving your Highness's displeasure," answered the Prince.

"I will have no evasions, boy—Where wert thou on St Valentine's Eve?"

"It is to be hoped that I was serving the good Saint, as a man of mould might," answered the young man, carelessly.

"Will my royal nephew tell us how his Master of the Horse was employed upon that holy Eve?" said the Duke of Albany.

"Speak, Robert—I command thee to speak," said the King.

"Ramorny was employed in my service—I think that answer may satisfy my uncle."

"But it will not satisfy *me*," said the angry father. "God knows, I never coveted man's blood, but that Ramorny's head I will have, if law can give it. He has been the encourager and partaker of all thy numerous vices and follies. I will take care he shall be so no more.—Call MacLouis, with a guard!"

"Do not injure an innocent man," interposed the Prince, desirous at every sacrifice to preserve his favourite from the menaced danger,—"I pledge my word that Ramorny was employed in business of mine, therefore could not be engaged in this brawl."

"False equivocator that thou art!" said the King, presenting to the Prince a ring, "behold the signet of Ramorny, lost in the infamous affray! It fell into the hands of a follower of the Douglas, and was given by the Earl to my brother. Speak not for Ramorny, for he dies; and go thou from my presence, and repent the fla-

gitious councils which could make thee stand before me with a falsehood in thy mouth.—Oh, shame, Robin, shame! as a son, thou hast lied to thy father; as a knight, to the head of thy order."

The Prince stood before his father mute, conscience-struck, and self-convicted. He then gave way to the honourable feelings which at bottom he really possessed, and threw himself at his father's feet.

"The false knight," he said, "deserves degradation, the disloyal subject death; but, oh! let the son crave from the father pardon for the servant who did not lead him into guilt, but who reluctantly plunged himself into it at his command! Let me bear the weight of my own folly, but spare those who have been my tools, rather than my accomplices. Remember, Ramorny was preferred to my service by my sainted mother."

"Name her not, Robin, I charge thee!" said the King; "she is happy that she never saw the child of her love stand before her doubly dishonoured, by guilt and by falsehood."

"I am indeed unworthy to name her," said the Prince; "and yet, my dear father, in her name I must petition for Ramorny's life."

"If I might offer my counsel," said the Duke of Albany, who saw that a reconciliation would soon take place betwixt the father and son, "I would advise that Ramorny be dismissed from the Prince's household and society, with such further penalty as his imprudence may seem to merit. The public will be contented with his disgrace, and the matter will be easily accommodated or stifled, so that his Highness do not attempt to screen his servant."

"Wilt thou, for my sake, Robin," said the King, with a faltering voice, and the tear in his eye, "dismiss this dangerous man? for my sake, who could not refuse thee the heart out of my bosom?"

"It shall be done, my father—done instantly," the Prince replied; and seizing the pen, he wrote a hasty dismissal of Ramorny from his service, and put it into Albany's hands. "I would I could fulfil all your wishes as easily, my royal father," he added, throwing himself at

the King's feet, who raised him up, and fondly folded him in his arms.

Albany scowled, but was silent; and it was not till after the space of a minute or two, that he said, "This matter being so happily accommodated, let me ask if your Majesty is pleased to attend the Even-song service in the chapel?"

"Surely," said the King. "Have I not thanks to pay to God, who has restored union to my family? You will go with us, brother?"

"So please your Grace to give me leave of absence—No," said the Duke. "I must concert with the Douglas, and others, the manner in which we may bring these Highland vultures to our lure."

Albany retired to think over his ambitious projects, while the father and son attended divine service, to thank God for their happy reconciliation.

CHAPTER II.

A FORMER chapter opened in the royal confessional; we are now to introduce our readers to a situation somewhat similar, though the scene and persons were very different. Instead of a Gothic and darkened apartment in a monastery, one of the most beautiful prospects in Scotland lay extended beneath the hill of Kinnoul, and at the foot of a rock which commanded the view in every direction, sat the Fair Maid of Perth, listening in an attitude of devout attention to the instructions of a Carthusian monk, in his white gown and scapular, who concluded his discourse with prayer, in which his proselyte devoutly joined.

When they had finished their devotions, the priest sat for some time with his eyes fixed on the glorious prospect, of which even the early and chilly season could not conceal the beauties, and it was some time ere he addressed his attentive companion.

"When I behold," he said at length, "this rich and varied land, with its castles, churches, convents, stately palaces, and fertile fields, these extensive woods, and that noble river, I know not, my daughter, whether most to admire the bounty of God or the ingratitude of man. He hath given us the beauty and fertility of the earth, and we have made the scene of his bounty a charnel-house and a battle-field. He hath given us power over the elements, and skill to erect houses for comfort and defence, and we have converted them into dens for robbers and ruffians."

"Yet surely, my Father, there is room for comfort," replied Catharine, "even in the very prospect we look upon. Yonder four goodly convents, with their churches, and their towers,

which tell the citizens with brazen voice, that they should think on their religious duties;—their inhabitants, who have separated themselves from the world, its pursuits and its pleasures, to dedicate themselves to the service of Heaven,—all bear witness, that if Scotland be a bloody and a sinful land, she is yet alive and sensible to the claims which religion demands of the human race."

"Verily, daughter, what you say seems truth; and yet, nearly viewed, too much of the comfort you describe will be found delusive. It is true, there was a period in the Christian world, when good men, maintaining themselves by the work of their hands, assembled together, not that they might live easily or sleep softly, but that they might strengthen each other in the Christian faith, and qualify themselves to be teachers of the word to the people. Doubtless there are still such to be found in the holy edifices on which we now look. But it is to be feared that the love of many has waxed cold. Our churchmen have become wealthy, as well by

the gifts of pious persons, as by the bribes which wicked men have given in their ignorance, imagining that they can purchase that pardon for endowments to the church, which Heaven has only offered to sincere penitents. And thus, as the Church waxeth rich, her doctrines have unhappily become dim and obscure, as a light is less seen if placed in a lamp of chased gold, than beheld through a screen of glass. God knows, if I see these things and mark them, it is from no wish of singularity, or desire to make myself a teacher in Israel; but because the fire burns in my bosom, and will not permit me to be silent. I obey the rules of my order, and withdraw not myself from its austerities. Be they essential to our salvation, or be they mere formalities, adopted to supply the want of real penitence and sincere devotion, I have promised, nay vowed, to observe them; and they shall be respected by me the more, that otherwise I might be charged with regarding my bodily ease, when Heaven is my witness how lightly I value what I may be called on to

act or suffer, if the purity of the Church could be restored, or the discipline of the priesthood replaced in its primitive simplicity."

"But, my Father," said Catharine, "even for these opinions men term you a Lollard and a Wickliffite, and say it is your desire to destroy churches and cloisters, and restore the religion of Heathenesse."

"Even so, my daughter, am I driven to seek refuge in hills and rocks, and must be presently contented to take my flight amongst the rude Highlanders, who are thus far in a more gracious state than those I leave behind me, that theirs are crimes of ignorance, not of presumption. I will not omit to take such means of safety and escape from their cruelty, as Heaven may open to me; for, while such appear, I shall account it a sign that I have still a service to accomplish. But when it is my Master's pleasure, He knows how willingly Clement Blair will lay down a vilified life upon earth, in humble hope of a blessed exchange hereafter.—But wherefore dost thou look north-

ward so anxiously, my child?—thy young eyes are quicker than mine—dost thou see any one coming?"

"I look, Father, for the Highland youth, Conachar, who will be thy guide to the hills, where his father can afford thee a safe, if a rude retreat. This he has often promised, when we spoke of you and of your lessons—I fear he is now in company where he will soon forget them."

"The youth hath sparkles of grace in him," said Father Clement; "although those of his race are usually too much devoted to their own fierce and savage customs, to endure with patience either the restraints of religion or those of the social law.—Thou hast never told me, daughter, how, contrary to all the usages either of the burgh or of the mountains, this youth came to reside in thy father's house?"

"All I know touching that matter," said Catharine, "is, that his father is a man of consequence among those hill men, and that he desired as a favour of my father, who hath had

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dealings with them in the way of his merchandize, to keep this youth for a certain time; and that two days since they parted, as he was to return home to his own mountains."

"And why has my daughter," demanded the priest, "maintained such a correspondence with this Highland youth, that she should know how to send for him when she desired to use his services in my behalf? Surely, this is much influence for a maiden to possess over such a wild colt as this youthful mountaineer."

Catharine blushed, and answered with hesitation, "If I have had any influence with Conachar, Heaven be my witness I have only exerted it to enforce upon his fiery temper compliance with the rules of civil life. It is true, I have long expected that you, my Father, would be obliged to take to flight, and I therefore had agreed with him that he should meet me at this place, as soon as he should receive a message from me with a token, which I yesterday dispatched. The messenger was a light-footed boy of his own clan, whom he used sometimes to send on errands into the Highlands."

"And am I then to understand, daughter, that this youth, so fair to the eye, was nothing more dear to you, than as you desired to enlighten his mind and reform his manners?"

"It is so, my Father, and no otherwise," answered Catharine; "and perhaps I did not do well to hold intimacy with him, even for his instruction and improvement. But my discourse never led farther."

"Then have I been mistaken, my daughter; for I thought I had seen in thee of late some change of purpose, and some wishful regards looking back to this world, of which you were at one time resolved to take leave."

Catharine hung down her head, and blushed more deeply than ever, as she said, "Yourself, Father, were used to remonstrate against my taking the veil."

"Nor do I now approve of it, my child," said the priest. "Marriage is an honourable state, appointed by Heaven as the regular means of continuing the race of man; and I read not in the Scriptures, what human inventions have since affirmed, concerning the superior excellence of

a state of celibacy. But I am jealous of thee, my child, as a father is of his only daughter, lest thou shouldst throw thyself away upon some one unworthy of thee. Thy parent, I know, less nice in thy behalf than I am, countenances the addresses of that fierce and riotous reveller, whom they call Henry of the Wynd. He is rich, it may be; but a haunter of idle and debauched company—a common prize-fighter, who has shed human blood like water. Can such a one be a fit mate for Catharine Glover?—And yet report says they are soon to be united."

The Fair Maid of Perth's complexion changed from red to pale, and from pale to red, as she hastily replied, "I think not of him; though it is true some courtesies have passed betwixt us of late, both as he is my father's friend, and as being, according to the custom of the time, my Valentine."

"Your Valentine, my child?" said Father Clement. "And can your modesty and prudence have trifled so much with the delicacy of your sex, as to place yourself in such a relation

to such a man as this artificer?—Think you that this Valentine, a godly saint and Christian bishop, as he is said to have been, ever countenanced a silly and unseemly custom, more likely to have originated in the heathen worship of Flora or Venus, when mortals gave the names of deities to their passions, and studied to excite instead of restraining them?"

"Father," said Catharine, in a tone of more displeasure than she had ever before assumed to the Carthusian, "I know not upon what ground you tax me thus severely for complying with a general practice, authorized by universal custom, and sanctioned by my father's authority. I cannot feel it kind that you put such misconstruction upon me."

"Forgive me, daughter," answered the priest, mildly, "if I have given you offence. But this Henry Smith is a forward, licentious man, to whom you cannot allow any uncommon degree of intimacy and encouragement, without exposing yourself to worse misconstruction,—unless, indeed, it be your purpose to wed him, and that very shortly."

"Say no more of it, my Father," said Catharine. "You give me more pain than you would desire to do; and I may be provoked to answer otherwise than as becomes me. Perhaps I have already had cause enough to make me repent my compliance with an idle custom. At any rate, believe that Henry Smith is nothing to me; and that even the idle intercourse arising from St Valentine's Day, is utterly broken off."

"I am rejoiced to hear it, my daughter," replied the Carthusian; "and must now prove you on another subject, which renders me most anxious on your behalf. You cannot yourself be ignorant of it, although I could wish it were not necessary to speak of a thing so dangerous, even before these surrounding rocks, cliffs, and stones. But it must be said.—Catharine, you have a lover in the highest rank of Scotland's sons of honour?"

"I know it, Father," answered Catharine, composedly. "I would it were not so."

"So would I also," said the priest, "did I see in my daughter only the child of folly,

which most young women are at her age, especially if possessed of the fatal gift of beauty. But as thy charms, to speak the language of an idle world, have attached to thee a lover of such high rank, so I know that thy virtue and wisdom will maintain the influence over the Prince's mind which thy beauty hath acquired."

"Father," replied Catharine, "the Prince is a licentious gallant, whose notice of me tends only to my disgrace and ruin. Can you, who seemed but now afraid that I acted imprudently in entering into an ordinary exchange of courtesies with one of my own rank, speak with patience of the sort of correspondence which the heir of Scotland dares to fix upon me? Know, that it is but two nights since he, with a party of his debauched followers, would have carried me by force from my father's house, had I not been rescued by that same rash-spirited Henry Smith,—who, if he be too hasty in venturing on danger on slight occasion, is always ready to venture his life in behalf of innocence, or in resistance of oppression. It is well my part to do him that justice."

"I should know something of that matter," said the monk, "since it was my voice that sent him to your assistance. I had seen the party as I passed your door, and was hastening to the civil power in order to raise assistance, when I perceived a man's figure coming slowly towards me. Apprehensive it might be one of the ambuscade, I stepped behind the buttresses of the chapel of St John, and seeing from a nearer view, that it was Henry Smith, I guessed which way he was bound, and raised my voice in an exhortation, which made him double his speed."

"I am beholden to you, Father," said Catharine; "but all this, and the Duke of Rothsay's own language to me, only show that the Prince is a profligate young man, who will scruple no extremities which may promise to gratify an idle passion, at whatever expense to its object. His emissary, Ramorny, has even had the insolence to tell me, that my father shall suffer for it, if I dare to prefer being the wife of an honest man, to becoming the loose paramour of a married prince. So I see no other remedy than to take

the veil, or run the risk of my own ruin and my poor father's. Were there no other reason, the terror of these threats, from a man so notoriously capable of keeping his word, ought as much to prevent my becoming the bride of any worthy man, as it should prohibit me from unlatching his door to admit murderers.—Oh, good Father! what a lot is mine! and how fatal am I likely to prove to my affectionate parent, and to any one with whom I might ally my unhappy fortunes!"

"Be yet of good cheer, my daughter," said the monk; "there is comfort for thee even in this extremity of apparent distress. Ramorny is a villain, and abuses the ear of his patron. The Prince is unhappily a dissipated and idle youth; but, unless my grey hairs have been strangely imposed on, his character is beginning to alter. He hath been awakened to Ramorny's baseness, and deeply regrets having followed his evil advice. I believe, nay, I am well convinced, that his passion for you has assumed a nobler and purer character, and that the lessons he has heard from me on the corruptions of the church,

and of the times, will, if enforced from your lips, sink deeply into his heart, and perhaps produce fruits, for the world to wonder as well as rejoice at. Old prophecies have said, that Rome shall fall by the speech of a woman."

"These are dreams, Father," said Catharine; "the visions of one whose thoughts are too much on better things, to admit his thinking justly upon the ordinary affairs of earth. When we have looked long at the sun, everything else can only be seen indistinctly."

"Thou art over hasty, my daughter," said Clement, "and thou shalt be convinced of it. The prospects which I am to open to thee were unfit to be exposed to one of a less firm sense of virtue, or a more ambitious temper. Perhaps it is not fit that, even to you, I should display them; but my confidence is strong in thy wisdom and thy principles. Know, then, that there is much chance that the Church of Rome will dissolve the union which she has herself formed, and release the Duke of Rothsay from his marriage with Marjory Douglas."

Here he paused.

"And if the Church hath power and will to do this," replied the maiden, "what influence can the divorce of the Duke from his wife produce on the fortunes of Catharine Glover?"

She looked at the priest anxiously as she spoke, and he had some apparent difficulty in framing his reply, for he looked on the ground while he answered her.

"What did beauty do for Catharine Logie? Unless our fathers told us falsely, it raised her to share the throne of David Bruce."

"Did she live happy, or die regretted, good Father?" asked Catharine, in the same calm and steady tone.

"She formed her alliance, from temporal, and perhaps criminal ambition," replied Father Clement; "and she found her reward in vanity and vexation of spirit. But had she wedded with the purpose that the believing wife should convert the unbelieving, or confirm the doubting, husband, what then had been her reward? Love and honour upon earth, and an inheritance in Heaven with Queen Margaret,

and those heroines who have been the nursing mothers of the Church."

Hitherto Catharine had sat upon a stone beside the priest's feet, and looked up to him as she spoke or listened; but now, as if animated by calm, yet settled feelings of disapprobation, she rose up, and extending her hand towards the monk as she spoke, addressed him with a countenance and voice which might have become a cherub, pitying, and even as much as possible sparing, the feelings of the mortal whose errors he is commissioned to rebuke.

"And is it even so?" she said, "and can so much of the wishes, hopes, and prejudices of this vile world, affect him who may be called to-morrow to lay down his life for opposing the corruptions of a wicked age and backsliding priesthood? Can it be the severely virtuous Father Clement, who advises his child to aim at, or even to think of, the possession of a throne and a bed, which cannot become vacant but by an act of crying injustice to the present possessor? Can it be the wise reformer of the

church who wishes to rest a scheme, in itself so unjust, upon a foundation so precarious? Since when is it, good Father, that the principal libertine has altered his morals so much, to be likely to court in honourable fashion the daughter of a Perth artizan? Two days must have wrought this change; for only that space has passed since he was breaking into my father's house at midnight, with worse mischief in his mind than that of a common robber. And think you, that if Rothsay's heart could dictate so mean a match, he could achieve such a purpose without endangering both his succession and his life, assailed by the Douglas and March at the same time, for what they must receive as an act of injury and insult to both their houses? Oh! Father Clement, where was your principle, where your prudence, when they suffered you to be bewildered by so strange a dream, and placed the meanest of your disciples in the right thus to reproach you?"

The old man's eyes filled with tears, as Catharine, visibly and painfully affected by what she had said, was at length silent.

"By the mouths of babes and sucklings," he said, "hath He rebuked those who would seem wise in their generation. I thank Heaven, that hath taught me better thoughts than my own vanity suggested, through the medium of so kind a monitress.—Yes, Catharine, I must not hereafter wonder or exclaim, when I see those whom I have hitherto judged too harshly, struggling for temporal power, and holding all the while the language of religious zeal. I thank thee, daughter, for thy salutary admonition, and I thank Heaven that sent it by thy lips, rather than those of a sterner reprover."

Catharine had raised her head to reply, and bid the old man, whose humiliation gave her pain, be comforted, when her eyes were arrested by an object close at hand. Among the crags and cliffs which surrounded this place of seclusion, there were two which stood in such close contiguity, that they seemed to have been portions of the same rock, which, rended by lightning or by an earthquake, now exhibited a chasm of about four feet in breadth, betwixt

the masses of stone. Into this chasm an oak tree had thrust itself, in one of the fantastic frolics which vegetation often exhibits in such situations. The tree, stunted and ill-fed, had sent its roots along the face of the rock in all directions to seek for supplies, and they lay like military lines of communication, contorted, twisted, and knotted like the immense snakes of the Indian archipelago. As Catharine's look fell upon the curious complication of knotty branches and twisted roots, she was suddenly sensible that two large eyes were visible among them, fixed and glaring at her, like those of a wild animal in ambush. She started, and without speaking, pointed out the object to her companion, and looking herself with more strict attention, could at length trace out the bushy red hair and shaggy beard, which had hitherto been concealed by the drooping branches and contorted roots of the tree.

When he saw himself discovered, the Highlander, for such he proved, stepped forth from his lurking-place, and stalking forward, dis-

played a colossal person, clothed in a purple, red, and green-checked plaid, under which he wore a jacket of bull's hide. His bow and arrows were at his back, his head was bare, and a large quantity of tangled locks, like the glibbs of the Irish, served to cover the head, and supplied all the purposes of a bonnet. His belt bore a sword and dagger, and he had in his hand a Danish pole-axe, more recently called a Lochaber axe. Through the same rude portal advanced, one by one, four men more, of similar size, and dressed and armed in the same manner.

Catharine was too much accustomed to the appearance of the inhabitants of the mountains so near to Perth, to permit herself to be alarmed, as another Lowland maiden might have been on the same occasion. She saw with tolerable composure these gigantic forms arrange themselves in a semicircle around and in front of the Monk and herself, all bending upon them in silence their large fixed eyes, expressing, as far as she could judge, a wild admiration of her beauty. She inclined her head to them, and ut-

tered imperfectly the usual words of a Highland salutation. The elder and leader of the party returned the greeting, and then again remained silent and motionless. The Monk told his beads; and even Catharine began to have strange fears for her personal safety, and anxiety to know whether they were to consider themselves at personal freedom. She resolved to make the experiment, and moved forward as if to descend the hill; but when she attempted to pass the line of Highlanders, they extended their pole-axes betwixt each other, so as effectually to occupy each opening through which she could have passed.

Somewhat disconcerted, yet not dismayed, for she could not conceive that any evil was intended, she sat down upon one of the scattered fragments of rock, and bade the Monk, standing by her side, be of good courage.

"If I fear," said Father Clement, "it is not for myself; for whether I be brained with the axes of these wild men, like an ox when, worn out by labour, he is condemned to the slaughter, or whether I am bound with their bow-strings, and delivered over to those who will take my

life with more cruel ceremony, it can but little concern me, if they suffer thee, dearest daughter, to escape uninjured."

"We have neither of us," replied the Maiden of Perth, "any cause for apprehending evil; and here comes Conachar, to assure us of it."

Yet as she spoke, she almost doubted her own eyes; so altered were the manner and attire of the handsome, stately, and almost splendidly dressed youth, who, springing like a roebuck, from a cliff of considerable height, lighted just in front of her. His dress was of the same tartan worn by those who had first made their appearance, but closed at the throat and elbows with a necklace and armlets of gold. The hauberk which he wore over his person, was of steel, but so clearly burnished, that it shone like silver. His arms were profusely ornamented, and his bonnet, besides the eagle's feather, marking the quality of chief, was ornamented with a chain of gold, wrapt several times around it, and secured by a large clasp, adorned with pearls. His brooch, by which the tartan mantle, or plaid, as it is now called, was secured on the

shoulder, was also of gold, large and curiously carved. He bore no weapon in his hand, excepting a small sapling stick, with a hooked head. His whole appearance and gait, which used formerly to denote a sullen feeling of conscious degradation, was now bold, forward, and haughty; and he stood before Catharine with smiling confidence, as if fully conscious of his improved appearance, and waiting till she should recognise him.

"Conachar," said Catharine, desirous to break this state of suspense, "are these your father's men?"

"No, fair Catharine," answered the young man. "Conachar is no more, unless in regard to the wrongs he has sustained, and the vengeance which they demand. I am Ian Eachin Maclan, son to the Chief of the Clan Quhele. I have moulted my feathers, as you see, when I changed my name. And for these men, they are not my father's followers, but mine. You see only one half of them collected; they form a band consisting of my foster father and eight sons, who are my body-guard, and the children

of my belt, who breathe but to do my will. But Conachar," he added, in a softer tone of voice, " lives again so soon as Catharine desires to see him; and while he is the young Chief of the Clan Quhele to all others, he is to her as humble and obedient as when he was Simon Glover's apprentice. See, here is the stick I had from you when we nutted together in the sunny braes of Lednoch, when Autumn was young in the year that is gone. I would not part with it, Catharine, for the truncheon of my tribe."

While Eachin thus spoke, Catharine began to doubt in her own mind whether she had acted prudently in requesting the assistance of a bold young man, elated, doubtless, by his sudden elevation from a state of servitude, to one which she was aware gave him extensive authority over a very lawless body of adherents.

" You do not fear me, fair Catharine?" said the young Chief, taking her hand. " I suffered my people to appear before me for a few minutes, that I might see how you could endure their

presence; and methinks you regarded them as if you were born to be a chieftain's wife."

"I have no reason to fear wrong from Highlanders," said Catharine, firmly; "especially as I thought Conachar was with them. Conachar has drunk of our cup, and eaten of our bread; and my father has often had traffic with Highlanders, and never was there wrong or quarrel betwixt him and them."

"No?" replied Hector, for such is the Saxon equivalent for Eachin, "what! never when he took the part of the Gow Chrom, (the bandy-legged Smith,) against Eachin MacIan?—Say nothing to excuse it, and believe it will be your own fault if I ever again allude to it. But you had some command to lay upon me—speak, and you shall be obeyed."

Catharine hastened to reply; for there was something in the young Chief's manner and language, which made her desire to shorten the interview.

"Eachin," she said, "since Conachar is no longer your name, you ought to be sensible that in claiming, as I honestly might, a service

from my equal, I little thought that I was addressing a person of such superior power and consequence. You, as well as I, have been obliged to the religious instruction of this good man. He is now in great danger; wicked men have accused him with false charges, and he is desirous to remain in safety and concealment till the storm shall pass away."

"Ha! the good Clerk Clement? Ay, the worthy clerk did much for me, and more than my rugged temper was capable to profit by. I will be glad to see any one in the town of Perth persecute one who hath taken hold of MacIan's mantle!"

"It may not be safe to trust too much to that," said Catharine. "I nothing doubt the power of your tribe, but when the Black Douglas takes up a feud, he is not to be scared by the shaking of a Highland plaid."

The Highlander disguised his displeasure at this speech with a forced laugh.

"The sparrow," he said, "that is next the eye, seems larger than the eagle that is perched on Bengoile. You fear the Douglasses most, be-

cause they sit next to you. But be it as you will—You will not believe how wide our hills, and vales, and forests, extend beyond the dusky barrier of yonder mountains, and you think all the world lies on the banks of the Tay. But this good Clerk shall see hills that could hide him were all the Douglasses on his quest—ay, and he shall see men enough also, to make them glad to get once more southward of the Grampians.—And wherefore should you not go with the good man? I will send a party to bring him in safety from Perth, and we will set up the old trade beyond Loch Tay—only no more cutting out of gloves for me. I will find your father in hides, but I will not cut them, save when they are on the creatures' backs."

"My father will come one day and see your housekeeping, Conachar—I mean, Hector.—But times must be quieter, for there is feud between the town's-people and the followers of the noblemen, and there is speech of war about to break out in the Highlands."

"Yes, by Our Lady, Catharine! and were it

not for that same Highland war, you should not thus put off your Highland visit, my pretty mistress. But the race of the hills are no longer to be divided into two nations. They will fight like men for the supremacy, and he who gets it will deal with the King of Scotland as an equal, not as a superior. Pray that the victory may fall to MacIan, my pious St Catharine, for thou shalt pray for one who loves thee dearly."

"I will pray for the right," said Catharine; "or rather, I will pray that there be peace on all sides.—Farewell, kind and excellent Father Clement; believe I shall never forget thy lessons—remember me in thy prayers.—But how wilt thou be able to sustain a journey so toilsome?"

"They shall carry him if need be," said Hector, "if we go far without finding a horse for him. But you, Catharine—it is far from hence to Perth. Let me attend you thither as I was wont."

"If you were as you were wont, I would

not refuse your escort. But gold brooches and bracelets are perilous company, when the Liddesdale and Annandale lancers are riding as throng upon the highway as the leaves at Hallowmass; and there is no safe meeting betwixt Highland tartans and steel jackets."

She hazarded this remark, as she somewhat suspected, that, in casting his slough, young Eachin had not entirely surmounted the habits which he had acquired in his humbler state, and that, though he might use bold words, he would not be rash enough to brave the odds of numbers, to which a descent into the vicinity of the city would be likely to expose him. It appeared that she judged correctly; for, after a farewell, in which she compounded for the immunity of her lips, by permitting him to kiss her hand, she returned towards Perth, and could obtain at times, when she looked back, an occasional glance of the Highlanders, as, winding through the most concealed and impracticable paths, they bent their way towards the North.

She felt in part relieved from her immediate

anxiety, as the distance increased betwixt her and these men, whose actions were only directed by the will of their chief, and whose chief was a giddy and impetuous boy. She apprehended no insult on her return to Perth, from the soldiery of any party whom she might meet; for the rules of chivalry were in those days a surer protection to a maiden of decent appearance, than an escort of armed men, whose cognizance might not be acknowledged as friendly by any other party whom they might chance to encounter. But more remote dangers pressed on her apprehension. The pursuit of the licentious Prince was rendered formidable by threats which his unprincipled counsellor, Ramorny, had not shunned to utter against her father, if she persevered in her coyness. These menaces, in such an age, and from such a character, were deep grounds for alarm; nor could she consider the pretensions to her favour which Conachar had scarce repressed during his state of servitude, and seemed now to avow boldly, as less fraught with evil, since there had been re-

peated incursions of the Highlanders into the very town of Perth, and citizens had, on more occasions than one, been made prisoners, and carried off from their own houses, or had fallen by the claymore in the very streets of their city. She feared, too, her father's importunity on behalf of the Smith, of whose conduct on St Valentine's day unworthy reports had reached her; and whose suit, had he stood clear in her good opinion, she dared not listen to, while Ramorny's threats of revenge upon her father rung on her ear. She thought on these various dangers with the deepest apprehension, and an earnest desire to escape from them and herself, by taking refuge in the cloister; but saw no possibility of obtaining her father's consent to the only course from which she expected peace and protection.

In the course of these reflections, we cannot discover that she very distinctly regretted that her perils attended her because she was the *Fair Maid of Perth;* this was one point which marked that she was not yet altogether

an angel; and perhaps it was another, that, in despite of Henry Smith's real or supposed delinquencies, a sigh escaped from her bosom, when she thought upon St Valentine's dawn.

CHAPTER III.

We have shown the secrets of the confessional; those of the sick chamber are not hidden from us. In a darkened apartment, where salves and medicines showed that the leech had been busy in his craft, a tall thin form lay on a bed, arrayed in a night-gown belted around him, with pain on his brow, and a thousand stormy passions agitating his bosom. Everything in the apartment indicated a man of opulence and of expense. Henbane Dwining, the apothecary, who seemed to have the care of the patient, stole with a crafty and cat-like step from one corner of the room to another, busying himself with mixing medicines and preparing dressings. The sick man groaned once or twice,

on which the leech, advancing to his bed-side, asked whether these sounds were a token of the pain of his body, or of the distress of his mind.

"Of both, thou poisoning varlet," said Sir John Ramorny; "and of being encumbered with thy accursed company."

"If that is all, I can relieve your knighthood of one of these ills, by presently removing myself elsewhere. Thanks to the feuds of this boisterous time, had I twenty hands, instead of these two poor servants of my art, (displaying his skinny palms,) there is enough of employment for them; well requited employment, too, where thanks and crowns contend which shall best pay my services; while you, Sir John, wreak upon your chirurgeon the anger you ought only to bear against the author of your wound."

"Villain, it is beneath me to reply to thee," said the patient; "but every word of thy malignant tongue is a dirk, inflicting wounds which set all the medicines of Arabia at defiance."

"Sir John, I understand you not; but if you

give way to these tempestuous fits of rage, it is impossible but fever and inflammation must be the result."

"Why then dost thou speak in a sense to chafe my blood? Why dost thou name the supposition of thy worthless self having more hands than nature gave thee, while I, a knight and gentleman, am mutilated like a cripple?"

"Sir John," replied the chirurgeon, "I am no divine, nor a mainly obstinate believer in some things which divines tell us. Yet I may remind you that you have been kindly dealt with; for if the blow which has done you this injury had lighted on your neck, as it was aimed, it would have swept your head from your shoulders, instead of amputating a less considerable member."

"I wish it had, Dwining—I wish it had lighted as it was addressed. I should not then have seen a policy, which had spun a web so fine as mine, burst through by the brute force of a drunken churl. I should not have been reserved to see horses which I must not mount—lists which I must no longer enter—splendours

which I cannot hope to share—or battles which I must not take part in. I should not, with a man's passions for power and for strife, be set to keep place among the women, despised by them, too, as a miserable impotent cripple, unable to aim at obtaining the favour of the sex."

"Supposing all this to be so, I will yet pray of your knighthood to remark," replied Dwining, still busying himself with arranging the dressings of the wounds, "that your eyes, which you must have lost with your head, may, being spared to you, present as rich a prospect of pleasure as either ambition, or victory in the lists or in the field, or the love of woman itself, could have proposed to you."

"My sense is too dull to catch thy meaning, leech," replied Ramorny. "What is this precious spectacle reserved to me in such a shipwreck?"

"The dearest that mankind knows," replied Dwining; and then, in the accent of a lover who utters the name of his beloved mistress, and expresses his passion for her in the very tone of his voice, he added the word "REVENGE!"

The patient had raised himself on his couch to listen with some anxiety for the solution of

the physician's enigma. He laid himself down again as he heard it explained, and after a short pause, asked, "In what Christian college learned you this morality, good Master Dwining?"

"In no Christian college," answered his physician; "for though it is privately received in most, it is openly and manfully adopted in none. But I have studied among the sages of Granada, where the fiery-souled Moor lifts high his deadly dagger as it drops with his enemy's blood, and avows the doctrine which the pallid Christian practises, though coward-like he dare not name it."

"Thou art then a more high-souled villain than I deemed thee," said Ramorny.

"Let that pass," answered Dwining. "The waters that are the stillest, are also the deepest; and the foe is most to be dreaded who never threatens till he strikes. You knights and men-at-arms, go straight to your purpose with sword in hand. We, who are clerks, win our access with a noiseless step and an indirect approach, but attain our object not less surely."

"And I," said the knight, "who have trod

to my revenge with a mailed foot, which made all echo around it, must now use such a slipper as thine? Ha!"

"He who lacks strength," said the wily mediciner, "must attain his purpose by skill."

"And tell me sincerely, mediciner, wherefore thou wouldst read me these devil's lessons? Why wouldst thou thrust me faster or further on to my vengeance, than I may seem to thee ready to go of my own accord? I am old in the ways of the world, man; and I know that such as thou do not drop words in vain, or thrust themselves upon the dangerous confidence of men like me, save with the prospect of advancing some purpose of their own. What interest hast thou in the road, whether peaceful or bloody, which I may pursue on these occurrents?"

"In plain dealing, Sir Knight, though it is what I seldom use," answered the leech, "my road to revenge is the same with yours."

"With mine, man?" said Ramorny, with a tone of scornful surprise. "I thought it had been high beyond thy reach. Thou aim at the same revenge with Ramorny!"

"Ay, truly," replied Dwining; "for the smithy churl under whose blow you have suffered, has often done me despite and injury. He has thwarted me in council, and despised me in action. His brutal and unhesitating bluntness is a living reproach to the subtlety of my natural disposition. I fear him, and I hate him."

"And you hope to find an active coadjutor in me?" said Ramorny, in the same supercilious tone as before. "But know, the artizan fellow is too low in degree, to be to me either the object of hatred or of fear. Yet he shall not escape. We hate not the reptile that has stung us, though we might shake it off the wound, and tread upon it. I know the ruffian of old as a stout man-at-arms, and a pretender, as I have heard, to the favour of the scornful puppet, whose beauties, forsooth, spurred us to our wise and hopeful attempt.—Fiends, that direct this nether world! by what malice have you decided that the hand which has couched a lance against the bosom of a prince, should be struck off like a sapling, by the blow of a churl, and during

the turmoil of a midnight riot!—Well, mediciner, thus far our courses hold together, and I bid thee well believe that I will crush for thee this reptile mechanic. But do not thou think to escape me, when that part of my revenge is done, which will be most easily and speedily accomplished."

"Not, it may be, altogether so easily accomplished," said the apothecary; "for if your knighthood will credit me, there will be found small ease or security in dealing with him. He is the strongest, boldest, and most skilful swordsman in Perth, and all the country around it."

"Fear nothing; he shall be met with had he the strength of Sampson. But then, mark me! Hope not thou to escape my vengeance, unless thou become my passive agent in the scene which is to follow. Mark me, I say once more. I have studied at no Moorish college, and lack some of thy unbounded appetite for revenge, but yet I will have my share of vengeance.—Listen to me, mediciner, while I shall thus far unfold myself; but beware of treachery, for powerful as thy fiend is, thou hast taken les-

sons from a meaner devil than mine. Hearken —the master whom I have served through vice and virtue, with too much zeal for my own character perhaps, but with unshaken fidelity to him—the very man, to soothe whose frantic folly I have incurred this irreparable loss, is, at the prayer of his doating father, about to sacrifice me, by turning me out of his favour, and leaving me at the mercy of the hypocritical relative, with whom he seeks a precarious reconciliation at my expense. If he perseveres in this most ungrateful purpose, thy fiercest Moors, were their complexion swarthy as the smoke of hell, shall blush to see their revenge outdone! But I will give him one more chance for honour and safety, before my wrath shall descend on him in unrelenting and unmitigated fury.—There then, thus far thou hast my confidence—Close hands on our bargain—close hands, did I say?—where is the hand, that should be the pledge and representative of Ramorny's plighted word! is it nailed on the public pillory, or flung as offal to the houseless dogs, who are even now snarling over it? Lay thy finger on

the mutilated stump then, and swear to be a faithful actor in my revenge, as I shall be in yours.—How now, Sir Leech, look you pale—you, who say to Death, stand back or advance, can you tremble to think of him or to hear him named? I have not mentioned your fee, for one who loves revenge for itself, requires no deeper bribe—yet, if broad lands and large sums of gold can increase thy zeal in a brave cause, believe me, these shall not be lacking."

"They tell for something in my humble wishes," said Dwining; "the poor man in this bustling world is thrust down like a dwarf in a crowd, and so trodden under foot—the rich and powerful rise like giants above the press, and are at ease, while all is turmoil around them."

"Then shalt thou arise above the press, mediciner, as high as gold can raise thee. This purse is weighty, yet it is but an earnest of thy guerdon."

"And this Smith? my noble benefactor—" said the leech, as he pouched the gratuity—"This Henry of the Wynd, or whatever is his name—would not the news that he hath paid the penalty of his action, assuage the pain of

thy knighthood's wound better than the balm of Mecca with which I have salved it?"

"He is beneath the thoughts of Ramorny; and I have no more resentment against him than I have ill-will at the senseless weapon which he swayed. But it is just thy hate should be vented upon him. Where is he chiefly to be met with?"

"That also I have considered," said Dwining. "To make the attempt by day in his own house, were too open and dangerous, for he hath five servants who work with him at the stithy, four of them strong knaves, and all loving to their master. By night were scarce less desperate, for he hath his doors strongly fastened with bolt of oak and bar of iron, and ere the fastenings of his house could be forced, the neighbourhood would rise to his rescue, especially as they are still alarmed by the practice on St Valentine's Even."

"O ay, true, mediciner," said Ramorny, "for deceit is thy nature, even with me—thou knewest my hand and signet, as thou said'st, when my hand was found cast out on the street, like the disgusting refuse of a shambles,—why,

having such knowledge, went'st thou with these jolter-headed citizens, to consult that Patrick Charteris, whose spurs should be hacked off from his heels for the communion which he holds with paltry burghers, and whom thou brought'st here with the fools to do dishonour to the lifeless hand, which, had it held its wonted place, he was not worthy to have touched in peace, or faced in war!"

"My noble patron, as soon as I had reason to know you had been the sufferer, I urged them with all my powers of persuasion to desist from prosecuting the feud, but the swaggering Smith, and one or two other hot heads, cried out for vengeance. Your knighthood must know this fellow calls himself bachelor to the Fair Maiden of Perth, and stands upon his honour to follow up her father's quarrel; but I have forestalled his market in that quarter, and that is something in earnest of revenge."

"How mean you by that, Sir Leech?" said the patient.

"Your knighthood shall conceive," said the mediciner, "that this Smith doth not live

within compass, but is an outlier and a galliard. I met him myself on St Valentine's day, shortly after the affray between the townsfolk and the followers of Douglas. Yes, I met him sneaking through the lanes and by-passages with a common minstrel wench, with her messan and her viol on his one arm, and her buxom self hanging upon the other. What thinks your honour? Is not this a trim squire, to cross a prince's love with the fairest girl in Perth, strike off the hand of a knight and baron, and become gentleman-usher to a strolling glee-woman, all in the course of the same four-and-twenty hours?"

"Marry, I think the better of him that he is so much of a gentleman's humour, clown though he be," said Ramorny. "I would he had been a precisian instead of a galliard, and I should have had better heart to aid thy revenge;—and such revenge! revenge on a Smith in the quarrel of a pitiful manufacturer of rotten cheverons!—And yet it shall be taken in full. Thou hast commenced it, I warrant me, by thine own manœuvres."

"In a small degree only," said the apothecary. "I took care that two or three of the most notorious gossips in Curfew Street, who liked not to hear Catharine called the Fair Maid of Perth, should be possessed of this story of her faithful Valentine. They opened on the scent so keenly, that, rather than doubt had fallen on the tale, they would have vouched for it as if their own eyes had seen it. The lover came to her father's within an hour after, and your worship may think what a reception he had from the angry Glover, for the damsel herself would not be looked upon. And thus your honour sees I had a foretaste of revenge. But I trust to receive the full draught from the hands of your lordship, with whom I am in a brotherly league, which——"

"Brotherly!" said the Knight, contemptuously. "But be it so, the priests say we are all of one common earth. I cannot tell—there seems to me some difference; but the better mould shall keep faith with the baser, and thou shalt have thy revenge. Call thou my page hither."

A young man made his appearance from the anteroom upon the physician's summons.

"Eviot," said the knight, "does Bonthron wait? and is he sober?"

"He is as sober as sleep can make him, after a deep drink," answered the page.

"Then fetch him hither, and do thou shut the door."

A heavy step presently approached the apartment, and a man entered, whose deficiency of height seemed made up in breadth of shoulders and strength of arm.

"There is a man thou must deal upon, Bonthron," said the knight.

The man smoothed his rugged features, and grinned a smile of satisfaction.

"That mediciner will show thee the party. Take such advantage of time, place, and circumstance, as will ensure the result; and mind you come not by the worst, for the man is the fighting Smith of the Wynd."

"It will be a tough job," growled the assassin; "for if I miss my blow, I may esteem myself but a dead man. All Perth rings with the Smith's skill and strength."

"Take two assistants with thee," said the knight.

"Not I," said Bonthron. "If you double anything, let it be the reward."

"Account it doubled," said his master; "but see thy work be thoroughly executed."

"Trust me for that, Sir Knight—seldom have I failed."

"Use this sage man's directions," said the wounded man, pointing to the physician. "And hark thee—await his coming forth—and drink not till the business be done."

"I will not," answered the dark satellite; "my own life depends on my blow being steady and sure. I know whom I have to deal with."

"Vanish, then, till he summons you, and have axe and dagger in readiness."

Bonthron nodded and withdrew.

"Will your knighthood venture to intrust such an act to a single hand?" said the mediciner, when the assassin had left the room. "May I pray you to remember that yonder party did, two nights since, baffle six armed men?"

"Question me not, Sir Mediciner; a man

like Bonthron, who knows time and place, is worth a score of confused revellers.—Call Eviot —thou shalt first exert thy powers of healing, and do not doubt that thou shalt, in the farther work, be aided by one who will match thee in the art of sudden and unexpected destruction."

The page Eviot again appeared at the mediciner's summons, and at his master's sign assisted the chirurgeon in removing the dressings from Sir John Ramorny's wounded arm. Dwining viewed the naked stump with a species of professional satisfaction, enhanced, no doubt, by the malignant pleasure which his evil disposition took in the pain and distress of his fellow-creatures. The knight just turned his eye on the ghastly spectacle, and uttered, under the pressure of bodily pain or mental agony, a groan which he would fain have repressed.

"You groan, sir," said the leech, in his soft insinuating tone of voice, but with a sneer of enjoyment, mixed with scorn, curling upon his lip, which his habitual dissimulation could not altogether disguise—"You groan—but be comforted. This Henry Smith knows his business

—his sword is as true to its aim as his hammer to the anvil. Had a common swordsman struck this fatal blow, he had harmed the bone and damaged the muscles, so that even my art might not have been able to repair them. But Henry Smith's cut is clean, and as sure as that with which my own scalpel could have made the amputation. In a few days you will be able, with care and attention to the ordinances of medicine, to stir abroad."

"But my hand—the loss of my hand—"

"It may be kept secret for a time," said the mediciner; "I have possessed two or three tattling fools, in deep confidence, that the hand which was found was that of your knighthood's groom, Black Quentin, and your knighthood knows that he is parted for Fife, in such sort as to make it generally believed."

"I know well enough," said Ramorny, "that the rumour may stifle the truth for a short time. But what avails this brief delay?"

"It may be concealed till your knighthood retires for a time from the court, and then, when new accidents have darkened the recollection of the present stir, it may be imputed to a wound

received from the shivering of a spear, or from a cross-bow bolt. Your slave will find a suitable device, and stand for the truth of it."

"The thought maddens me," said Ramorny, with another groan of mental and bodily agony. "Yet I see no better remedy."

"There is none other," said the leech, to whose evil nature his patron's distress was delicious nourishment. "In the meanwhile it is believed you are confined by the consequences of some bruises, aiding the sense of displeasure at the Prince's having consented to dismiss you from his household, at the remonstrance of Albany; which is publicly known."

"Villain, thou rackest me," said the patient.

"Upon the whole, therefore," said Dwining, "your knighthood has escaped well, and saving the lack of your hand, a mischance beyond remedy, you ought rather to rejoice than to complain; for no barber-chirurgeon in France or England could have more ably performed the operation than this churl with one downright blow."

"I understand my obligation fully," said

Ramorny, struggling with his anger, and affecting composure; "and if Bonthron pays him not with a blow equally downright, and rendering the aid of the leech unnecessary, say that John of Ramorny cannot requite an obligation."

"That is said like yourself, noble knight," answered the mediciner. "And let me further say, that the operator's skill must have been vain, and the hæmorrhage must have drained your life-veins, but for the bandages, the cautery, and the styptics, applied by the good monks, and the poor services of your humble vassal, Henbane Dwining."

"Peace," exclaimed the patient, "with thy ill-omened voice, and worse-omened name!—Methinks, as thou mentioned the tortures I have undergone, my tingling nerves stretch and contract themselves as if they still actuated the fingers that could clutch a dagger."

"That," explained the leech, "may it please your knighthood, is a phenomenon well known to our profession. There have been those among the ancient sages who have thought that there still remained a sympathy between the severed

nerves, and those belonging to the amputated limb; and that the severed fingers are seen to quiver and strain, as corresponding with the impulse which proceeds from their sympathy with the energies of the living system. Could we recover the hand from the Cross, or from the custody of the Black Douglas, I would be pleased to observe this wonderful operation of occult sympathies. But I fear me, one might as safely go to wrest the joint from the talons of an hungry eagle."

"And thou may'st as safely break thy malignant jests on a wounded lion, as on John of Ramorny!" said the knight, raising himself in uncontrollable indignation. "Caitiff, proceed to thy duty; and remember, that if my hand can no longer clasp a dagger, I can command an hundred."

"The sight of one drawn and brandished in anger were sufficient," said Dwining, "to consume the vital powers of your chirurgeon. But who then," he added, in a tone partly insinuating, partly jeering, "who then would relieve the fiery and scorching pain which my patron now

suffers, and which renders him exasperated even with his poor servant for quoting the rules of healing, so contemptible, doubtless, compared with the power of inflicting wounds?"

Then, as daring no longer to trifle with the mood of his dangerous patient, the leech addressed himself seriously to salving the wound, and applied a fragrant balm, the odour of which was diffused through the apartment, while it communicated a refreshing coolness, instead of the burning heat; a change so gratifying to the fevered patient, that, as he had before groaned with agony, he could not now help sighing for pleasure, as he sunk back on his couch to enjoy the ease which the dressing bestowed.

"Your knightly lordship now knows who is your friend," said Dwining; "had you yielded to a rash impulse, and said, 'Slay me this worthless quack salver,' where, within the four seas of Britain, would you have found the man to have ministered to you as much comfort?"

"Forget my threats, good leech," said Ramorny, "and beware how you tempt me. Such as

I brook not jests upon our agony. See thou keep thy scoffs, to pass upon misers* in the hospital."

Dwining ventured to say no more, but poured some drops from a phial which he took from his pocket, into a small cup of wine allayed with water.

"This draught," said the man of art, "is medicated to produce a sleep which must not be interrupted."

"For how long will it last?" asked the knight.

"The period of its operation is uncertain—perhaps till morning."

"Perhaps for ever," said the patient. "Sir Mediciner, taste me that liquor presently, else it passes not my lips."

The leech obeyed him, with a scornful smile. "I would drink the whole with readiness; but the juice of this Indian gum will bring sleep on the healthy man as well as upon the patient, and

* That is, miserable persons, as used in Spenser, and other writers of his time; though the sense is now restricted to those who are covetous.

the business of the leech requires me to be a watcher."

"I crave your pardon, Sir Leech," said Ramorny, looking downwards, as if ashamed to have manifested suspicion.

"There is no room for pardon where offence must not be taken," answered the mediciner. "An insect must thank a giant that he does not tread on him. Yet, noble knight, insects have their power of harming as well as physicians. What would it have cost me, save a moment's trouble, so to have drugged that balm, as should have made your arm rot to the shoulder-joint, and your life-blood curdle in your veins to a corrupted jelly? What is there that prevented me to use means yet more subtle, and to taint your room with essences, before which the light of life twinkles more and more dimly, till it expires, like a torch amidst the foul vapours of some subterranean dungeon? You little estimate my power, if you know not that these, and yet deeper modes of destruction, stand at command of my art. But a physician slays not the patient by whose generosity he lives, and far less will he,

the breath of whose nostrils is the hope of revenge, destroy the vowed ally who is to favour his pursuit of it.—Yet one word;—should a necessity occur for rousing yourself,—for who in Scotland can promise himself eight hours uninterrupted repose?—then smell at the strong essence contained in this pouncet-box.—And now, farewell, Sir Knight; and if you cannot think of me as a man of nice conscience, acknowledge me at least as one of reason and of judgment."

So saying the mediciner left the room; his usual mean and shuffling gait elevating itself into something more noble, as conscious of a victory over his imperious patient.

Sir John Ramorny remained sunk in unpleasing reflections, until he began to experience the incipient effects of the soporific draught. He then roused himself for an instant, and summoned his page.

"Eviot! what ho! Eviot!—I have done ill to unbosom myself so far to this poisonous quack salver—Eviot!"

The page entered.

"Is the mediciner gone forth?"

"Yes, so please your knighthood."

"Alone, or accompanied?"

"Bonthron spoke apart with him, and followed him almost immediately—by your lordship's command, as I understood him."

"Lack-a-day, yes!—he goes to seek some medicaments—he will return anon. If he be intoxicated, see he come not near my chamber, and permit him not to enter into converse with any one. He raves when drink has touched his brain. He was a rare fellow, before a Southron bill laid his brain-pan bare; but since that time he talks gibberish whenever the cup has crossed his lips.—Said the leech aught to you, Eviot?"

"Nothing, save to reiterate his commands that your honour be not disturbed."

"Which thou must surely obey," said the knight. "I feel the summons to rest, of which I have been deprived since this unhappy wound —At least, if I have slept it has been but for a snatch. Aid me to take off my gown, Eviot."

"May God and the saints send you good rest, my lord," said the page, retiring after

he had rendered his wounded master the assistance required.

As Eviot left the room, the knight, whose brain was becoming more and more confused, muttered over the page's departing salutation.

" God—saints—I *have* slept sound under such a benison. But now—methinks if I awake not to the accomplishment of my proud hopes of power and revenge, the best wish for me is, that the slumbers which now fall around my head, were the forerunners of that sleep which shall return my borrowed powers to their original non-existence—I can argue it no farther."

Thus speaking, he fell into a profound sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

The night which sunk down on the sick-bed of Ramorny, was not doomed to be a quiet one. Two hours had passed since curfew-bell, then rung at seven o'clock at night, and in those primitive times all were retired to rest, excepting such whom devotion, or duty, or debauchery made watchers; and the evening being that of Shrovetide, or, as it was called in Scotland, Fastern's E'en, the vigils of gaiety were by far the most frequented of the three.

The common people had, throughout the day, toiled and struggled at foot-ball; the nobles and gentry had fought cocks, and hearkened to the wanton music of the minstrel; while the citizens had gorged themselves upon pancakes fried in lard, and brose, or brewis, the fat broth, that is, in which salted beef had been boiled, poured upon

highly-roasted oatmeal, a dish which even now is not ungrateful to simple old-fashioned Scottish palates. These were all exercises and festive dishes proper to the holiday. It was no less a solemnity of the evening, that the devout Catholic should drink as much good ale and wine as he had means to procure; and, if young and able, that he should dance at the ring, or figure among the morrice-dancers, who, in the city of Perth, as elsewhere, wore a peculiarly fantastic garb, and distinguished themselves by their address and activity. All this gaiety took place under the prudential consideration, that the long term of Lent, now approaching, with its fasts and deprivations, rendered it wise for mortals to cram as much idle and sensual indulgence as they could into the brief space which intervened before its commencement.

The usual revels had taken place, and in most parts of the city were succeeded by the usual pause. A particular degree of care had been taken by the nobility, to prevent any renewal of discord betwixt their followers and the citizens of the town; so that the revels had

proceeded with fewer casualties than usual, embracing only three deaths, and certain fractured limbs, which, occurring to individuals of little note, were not accounted worth inquiring into. The Carnival was closing quietly in general, but in some places the sport was still kept up.

One company of revellers, who had been particularly noticed and applauded, seemed unwilling to conclude their frolic. The Entry, as it was called, consisted of thirteen persons, habited in the same manner, having doublets of chamois leather sitting close to their bodies, curiously slashed, and laced. They wore green caps with silver tassels, red ribbands, and white shoes, had bells hung at their knees and around their ankles, and naked swords in their hands. This gallant party, having exhibited a sword-dance before the King, with much clashing of weapons, and fantastic interchange of postures, went on gallantly to repeat their exhibition before the door of Simon Glover, where, having made a fresh exhibition of their agility, they caused wine to be served round to their own

company and the by-standers, and with a loud shout drank to the health of the Fair Maid of Perth. This summoned old Simon to the door of his habitation, to acknowledge the courtesy of his countrymen, and in his turn to send the wine around in honour of the Merry Morrice Dancers of Perth.

"We thank thee, Father Simon," said a voice, which strove to drown in an artificial squeak the pert conceited tone of Oliver Proudfute. "But a sight of thy lovely daughter had been more sweet to us young bloods, than a whole vintage of Malvoisie."

"I thank you, neighbours, for your goodwill," replied the Glover. "My daughter is ill at ease, and may not come forth into the cold night air—but if this gay gallant, whose voice methinks I should know, will go into my poor house, she will charge him with thanks for the rest of you."

"Bring them to us at the hostelrie of the Griffin," cried the rest of the ballet to their favoured companion; "for there will we ring-

in Lent, and have another rouse to the health of the lovely Catharine."

"Have with you in half an hour," said Oliver, "and see who will quaff the largest flagon, or sing the loudest glee. Nay, I will be merry, in what remains of Fastern's Even, should Lent find me with my mouth closed for ever."

"Farewell, then," cried his mates in the morrice; "farewell, slashing Bonnet-maker, till we meet again."

The morrice-dancers accordingly set out upon their further progress, dancing and carolling as they went along to the sound of four musicians, who led the joyous band, while Simon Glover drew their Coryphæus into his house, and placed him in a chair by his parlour fire.

"But where is your daughter?" said Oliver. "She is the bait for us brave blades."

"Why, truly, she keeps her apartment, neighbour Oliver; and, to speak plainly, she keeps her bed."

"Why, then will I up stairs to see her in her sorrow—you have marred my ramble, Gaf-

fer Glover, and you owe me amends—a roving blade like me—I will not lose both the lass and the glass.—Keeps her bed, does she?

> "My dog and I we have a trick
> To visit maids when they are sick;
> When they are sick and like to die,
> O thither do come my dog and I.
>
> "And when I die, as needs must hap,
> Then bury me under the good ale-tap;
> With folded arms there let me lie,
> Cheek for jowl, my dog and I."

"Canst thou not be serious for a moment, neighbour Proudfute?" said the Glover; "I want a word of conversation with you."

"Serious?" answered his visitor; "why, I have been serious all this day—I can hardly open my mouth, but something comes out about death, a burial, or such-like—the most serious subjects that I wot of."

"St John, man," said the Glover, "art thou fey?"

"No, not a whit—it is not my own death which these gloomy fancies foretell—I have a strong horoscope, and shall live for fifty years to come. But it is the case of the poor fellow

—the Douglas-man, whom I struck down at the fray of St Valentine's—he died last night—it is that which weighs on my conscience, and awakens sad fancies. Ah, Father Simon, we martialists that have spilt blood in our choler, have dark thoughts at times—I sometimes wish that my knife had cut nothing but worsted thrums."

"And I wish," said Simon, "that mine had cut nothing but buck's leather, for it has sometimes cut my own fingers. But thou mayst spare thy remorse for this bout; there was but one man dangerously hurt at the affray, and it was he from whom Henry Smith hewed the hand, and he is well recovered. His name is Black Quentin, one of Sir John Ramorny's followers. He has been sent privately back to his own country of Fife."

"What, Black Quentin?—why, that is the very man that Henry and I, as we ever keep close together, struck at in the same moment, only my blow fell somewhat earlier. I fear further feud will come of it, and so does the Provost. —And is he recovered? Why, then, I will be jovial, and since thou wilt not let me see how

Kate becomes her night-gear, I will back to the Griffin to my morrice-dancers."

"Nay, stay but one instant. Thou art a comrade of Henry Wynd, and hast done him the service to own one or two deeds, and this last among others. I would thou couldst clear him of other charges, with which fame hath loaded him."

"Nay, I will swear by the hilt of my sword, they are as false as hell, Father Simon. What! —blades and targets! shall not men of the sword stick together?"

"Nay, neighbour Bonnet-maker, be patient; thou mayst do the Smith a kind turn, an thou takest this matter the right way. I have chosen thee to consult with anent this matter—not that I hold thee the wisest head in Perth, for should I say so I should lie."

"Ay, ay," answered the self-satisfied Bonnet-maker; "I know where you think my fault lies—you cool heads think we hot heads are fools—I have heard men call Henry Wynd such a score of times."

"Fool enough and cool enough may rhyme

together passing well," said the Glover; "but thou art good-natured, and I think lovest this crony of thine. It stands awkwardly with us and him just now," continued Simon. "Thou knowest there hath been some talk of marriage between my daughter Catharine and Henry Gow?"

"I have heard some such song since St Valentine's Morn—Ah! he that shall win the Fair Maid of Perth must be a happy man—and yet marriage spoils many a pretty fellow. I myself somewhat regret——"

"Pr'ythee, truce with thy regrets for the present, man," interrupted the Glover, somewhat peevishly. "You must know, Oliver, that some of these talking women, who I think make all the business of the world their own, have accused Henry of keeping light company with glee-women and such-like. Catharine took it to heart; and I held my child insulted, that he had not waited upon her like a Valentine, but had thrown himself into unseemly society on the very day when, by ancient custom, he might have had an opportunity to press his interest with my daughter.—Therefore when he came hither late on the

evening of St Valentine's, I, like a hasty old fool, bid him go home to the company he had left, and denied him admittance. I have not seen him since, and I begin to think that I may have been too rash in the matter. She is my only child, and the grave should have her sooner than a debauchee. But I have hitherto thought I knew Henry Gow as if he were my son. I cannot think he would use us thus, and it may be there are means of explaining what is laid to his charge. I was led to ask Dwining, who is said to have saluted the Smith while he was walking with this choice mate—If I am to believe his words, this wench was the Smith's cousin, Joan Letham. But thou knowest that the pottercarrier ever speaks one language with his visage, and another with his tongue—Now, thou, Oliver, hast too little wit—I mean, too much honesty—to belie the truth, and as Dwining hinted that thou also hadst seen her—"

"I see her, Simon Glover! Will Dwining say that I saw her?"

"No, not precisely that—but he says you *told* him you had met the Smith thus accompanied."

"He lies, and I will pound him into a gallipot!" said Oliver Proudfute.

"How? Did you never tell him then of such a meeting?"

"What an if I did?" said the Bonnet-maker. "Did not he swear that he would never repeat again to living mortal what I communicated to him? and therefore, in telling the occurrent to you he hath made himself a liar."

"Thou didst not meet the Smith, then," said Simon, "with such a loose baggage as fame reports?"

"Lack-a-day, not I—perhaps I did, perhaps I did not. Think, father Simon—I have been a four-years married man, and can you expect me to remember the turn of a glee-woman's ankle, the trip of her toe, the lace upon her petticoat, and such toys? No, I leave that to unmarried wags like my gossip Henry."

"The upshot is, then," said the Glover, much vexed, "you *did* meet him on St Valentine's day walking the public streets——"

"Not so, neighbour; I met him in the most distant and dark lane in Perth, steering full for

his own house, with bag and baggage, which, as a gallant fellow, he carried in his arms, the puppy dog on one, and the jilt herself (and to my thought she was a pretty one) hanging upon the other."

"Now, by good St John," said the Glover, "this infamy would make a Christian man renounce his faith, and worship Mahound in very anger! But he has seen the last of my daughter. I would rather she went to the wild Highlands with a bare-legged catheran, than wed with one who could, at such a season, so broadly forget honour and decency—Out upon him!"

"Tush! tush! father Simon," said the liberal-minded Bonnet-maker; "you consider not the nature of young blood. Their company was not long, for—to speak truth, I did keep a little watch on him—I met him before sunrise, conducting his errant damsel to the Lady's Stairs, that the wench might embark on the Tay from Perth; and I know for certainty, (for I made inquiry,) that she sailed in a gabbart for Dundee. So you see it was but a slight escape of youth."

"And he came here," said Simon, bitterly, "beseeching for admittance to my daughter, while he had his harlot awaiting him at home! I had rather he had slain a score of men.—It skills not talking, least of all to thee, Oliver Proudfute, who, if thou art not such a one as himself, would fain be thought so. But——"

"Nay, think not of it so seriously," said Oliver, who began to reflect on the mischief his tattling was likely to occasion to his friend, and on the consequences of Henry Gow's displeasure, when he should learn the disclosure which he had made, rather in vanity of heart than in evil intention. "Consider," he continued, "that there are follies belonging to youth. Occasion provokes men to such frolics, and confession wipes them off. I care not if I tell thee, that though my wife be as goodly a woman as the city has, yet I myself——"

"Peace, silly braggart," said the Glover, in high wrath; "thy loves and thy battles are alike apocryphal. If thou must needs lie, which I think is thy nature, canst thou invent no falsehood that may at least do thee some cre-

dit? Do I not see through thee, as I could see the light through the horn of a base lantern? Do I not know, thou filthy weaver of rotten worsted, that thou dared no more cross the threshold of thy own door, if thy wife heard of thy making such a boast, than thou darest cross naked weapons with a boy of twelve years old, who has drawn a sword for the first time in his life? By St John, it were paying you for your tale-bearing trouble, to send thy Maudie word of thy gay brags."

The Bonnet-maker, at this threat, started as if a cross-bow bolt had whizzed past his head when least expected. And it was with a trembling voice that he replied, "Nay, good father Glover, thou takest too much credit for thy grey hairs. Consider, good neighbour, thou art too old for a young martialist to wrangle with. And in the matter of my Maudie, I can trust thee, for I know no one who would be less willing than thou to break the peace of families."

"Trust thy coxcomb no longer with me," said the incensed Glover; "but take thyself, and the thing thou call'st a head, out of my

reach, lest I borrow back five minutes of my youth, and break thy pate."

"You have had a merry Fastern's Even, neighbour," said the Bonnet-maker, "and I wish you a quiet sleep; we shall meet better friends to-morrow."

"Out of my doors to-night!" said the Glover. "I am ashamed so idle a tongue as thine should have power to move me thus."

"Idiot—beast—loose-tongued coxcomb!" he exclaimed, throwing himself into a chair, as the Bonnet-maker disappeared; "that a fellow made up of lies should not have had the grace to frame one when it might have covered the shame of a friend! And I—what am I, that I should, in my secret mind, wish that such a gross insult to me and my child had been glossed over? Yet such was my opinion of Henry, that I would have willingly believed the grossest figment the swaggering ass could have invented. Well!—it skills not thinking of it. Our honest name must be maintained, though everything else should go to ruin."

While the Glover thus moralized on the un-

welcome confirmation of the tale he wished to think untrue, the expelled morrice-dancer had leisure, in the composing air of a cool and dark February night, to meditate on the consequences of the Glover's unrestrained anger.

"But it is nothing," he bethought himself, "to the wrath of Henry Wynd, who hath killed a man for much less than placing displeasure betwixt him and Catharine, as well as her fiery old father. Certainly I were better have denied everything. But the humour of seeming a knowing gallant (as in truth I am) fairly overcame me. Were I best go to finish the revel at the Griffin?—But then Maudie will rampauge on my return, and this being holiday even, I may claim a privilege.—I have it—I will not to the Griffin—I will to the Smith's, who must be at home, since no one hath seen him this day amid the revel. I will endeavour to make peace with him, and offer my intercession with the Glover. Harry is a simple downright fellow, and though I think he is my better in a broil, yet in discourse I can turn him my own way. The streets are now quiet—the night, too, is

dark, and I may step aside if I meet any rioters. I will to the Smith's, and, securing him for my friend, I care little for old Simon. Saint Ringan bear me well through this night, and I will clip my tongue out ere it shall run my head into such peril again! Yonder old fellow, when his blood was up, looked more like a carver of buff-jerkins than a clipper of kid-gloves."

With these reflections, the puissant Oliver walked swiftly, yet with as little noise as possible, towards the wynd in which the Smith, as our readers are aware, had his habitation. But his evil fortune had not ceased to pursue him. As he turned into the High, or principal Street, he heard a burst of music very near him, followed by a loud shout.

"My merry mates, the morrice-dancers," thought he; "I would know old Jeremy's rebeck among an hundred. I will venture across the street ere they pass on—if I am espied, I shall have the renown of some private quest, which may do me honour as a roving blade."

With these longings for distinction among the gay and gallant, combated, however, internally, by more prudential considerations, the Bonnet-maker made an attempt to cross the street. But the revellers, whoever they might be, were accompanied by torches, the flash of which fell upon Oliver, whose light-coloured habit made him the more distinctly visible. The general shout of "A prize, a prize," overcame the noise of the minstrel, and before the Bonnet-maker could determine whether it were better to stand or fly, two active young men, clad in fantastic masking habits, resembling wild men, and holding great clubs, seized upon him, saying, in a tragical tone, "Yield thee, man of bells and bombast; yield thee, rescue or no rescue, or truly thou art but a dead morrice-dancer."

"To whom shall I yield me?" said the Bonnet-maker, with a faltering voice; for though he saw he had to do with a party of mummers who were a-foot for pleasure, yet he observed, at the same time, that they were far above his class, and he lost the audacity necessary to sup-

port his part in a game where the inferior was likely to come by the worst.

"Dost thou parley, slave?" answered one of the maskers; "and must I show thee that thou art a captive, by giving thee incontinently the bastinado?"

"By no means, puissant man of Ind," said the Bonnet-maker; "lo, I am conformable to your pleasure."

"Come, then," said those who had arrested him, "come and do homage to the Emperor of Mimes, King of Caperers, and Grand Duke of the Dark Hours, and explain by what right thou art so presumptuous as to prance and jingle, and wear out shoe-leather within his dominions, without paying him tribute. Know'st thou not thou hast incurred the pains of high-treason?"

"That were hard, methinks," said poor Oliver, "since I knew not that his Grace exercised the government this evening. But I am willing to redeem the forfeit, if the purse of a poor Bonnet-maker may, by the mulct of a gallon of wine, or some such matter."

"Bring him before the Emperor," was the

universal cry; and the morrice-dancer was placed before a slight, but easy and handsome figure of a young man, splendidly attired, having a cincture and tiara of peacock's feathers, then brought from the East as a marvellous rarity; a short jacket and under-dress of leopard's skin fitted closely the rest of his person, which was attired in flesh-coloured silk, so as to resemble the ordinary idea of an Indian prince. He wore sandals, fastened on with ribbands of scarlet silk, and held in his hand a sort of fan, such as ladies then used, composed of the same feathers, assembled into a plume or tuft.

"What mister wight have we here," said the Indian chief, "who dares to tie the bells of a morrice on the ankles of a dull ass?—Hark ye, friend, your dress should make you a subject of ours, since our empire extends over all Merryland, including mimes and minstrels of every description.—What, tongue-tied? He lacks wine—minister to him our nut-shell full of sack."

A huge calabash full of sack was offered to

the lips of the supplicant, while this prince of revellers exhorted him,—

"Crack me this nut, and do it handsomely, and without wry faces."

But, however Oliver might have relished a moderate sip of the same good wine, he was terrified at the quantity he was required to deal with. He drank a draught, and then entreated for mercy.

"So please your princedom, I have yet far to go, and if I were to swallow your grace's bounty, for which accept my dutiful thanks, I should not be able to stride over the next kennel."

"Art thou in case to bear thyself like a galliard? Now, cut me a caper—ha! one—two—three—admirable!—again—give him the spur—(here a satellite of the Indian gave Oliver a slight touch with his sword)—Nay, that is best of all—he sprang like a cat in a gutter! Tender him the nut once more—nay, no compulsion, he has paid forfeit, and deserves not only free dismissal but reward. Kneel down,

kneel, and arise Sir Knight of the Calabash! What is thy name? And one of you lend me a rapier."

"Oliver, may it please your honour—I mean your principality."

"Oliver, man? nay, then thou art one of the Douze peers already, and fate has forestalled our intended promotion. Yet rise up, sweet Sir Oliver Thatchpate, Knight of the honourable order of the Pumpkin—Rise up, in the name of Nonsense, and begone about thine own concerns, in the devil's name."

So saying, the prince of the revels bestowed a smart blow with the flat of the weapon across the Bonnet-maker's shoulders, who sprung to his feet with more alacrity of motion than he had hitherto displayed, and, accelerated by the laugh and halloo which arose behind him, arrived at the Smith's house before he stopped, with the same speed with which a hunted fox makes for his den.

It was not till the affrighted Bonnet-maker had struck a blow on the door, that he recollected he ought to have bethought himself be-

forehand in what manner he was to present himself before Henry, and obtain his forgiveness for his rash communications to Simon Glover. No one answered to his first knock, and, perhaps, as these reflections arose, in the momentary pause of recollection which circumstances permitted, the perplexed Bonnet-maker might have flinched from his purpose, and made his retreat to his own premises, without venturing upon the interview which he had purposed. But a distant strain of minstrelsy revived his apprehensions of falling once more into the hands of the gay maskers from whom he had escaped, and he renewed his summons on the door of the Smith's dwelling, with a hurried, though faltering hand. He was then appalled by the deep, yet not unmusical voice of Henry Gow, who answered from within,—"Who calls at this hour?—and what is it that you want?"

"It is I—Oliver Proudfute," replied the Bonnet-maker; "I have a merry jest to tell you, gossip Henry."

"Carry thy foolery to some other market. I

am in no jesting humour," said Henry. "Go hence—I will see no one to-night."

"But, gossip—good gossip," answered the martialist without, "I am beset with villains, and beg the shelter of your roof!"

"Fool that thou art!" replied Henry; "no dunghill cock, the most recreant that has fought this Fastern's Even, would ruffle his feathers at such a craven as thee!"

At this moment another strain of minstrelsy, and, as the Bonnet-maker conceited, one which approached much nearer, goaded his apprehensions to the uttermost; and in a voice, the tones of which expressed the undisguised extremity of instant fear, he exclaimed,—

"For the sake of our old gossipred, and for the love of Our blessed Lady, admit me, Henry, if you would not have me found a bloody corpse at thy door, slain by the bloody-minded Douglasses!"

"That would be a shame to me," thought the good-natured Smith; "and sooth to say, his peril may be real. There are roving hawks that will strike at a sparrow as soon as a heron."

With these reflections, half-muttered, half-spoken, Henry undid his well-fastened door, proposing to reconnoitre the reality of the danger before he permitted his unwelcome guest to enter the house. But as he looked abroad to ascertain how matters stood, Oliver bolted in like a scared deer into a thicket, and harboured himself by the Smith's kitchen-fire, before Henry could look up and down the lane, and satisfy himself there were no enemies in pursuit of the apprehensive fugitive. He secured his door, therefore, and returned into the kitchen, displeased that he had suffered his gloomy solitude to be intruded upon by sympathizing with apprehensions, which he thought he might have known were so easily excited as those of his timid townsman.

"How now?" he said, coldly enough, when he saw the Bonnet-maker calmly seated by his hearth. "What foolish revel is this, Master Oliver?—I see no one near to harm you."

"Give me a drink, kind gossip," said Oliver; "I am choked with the haste I have made to come hither."

"I have sworn," said Henry, "that this shall be no revel night in this house—I am in my work-day clothes, as you see, and keep fast, as I have reason, instead of holiday. You have had wassail enough for the holiday evening, for you speak thick already—If you wish more ale or wine you must go elsewhere."

"I have had over much wassail already," said poor Oliver, "and have been wellnigh drowned in it.—That accursed calabash!—A draught of water, kind gossip—you will not surely let me ask for that in vain? or, if it is your will, a cup of cold small ale."

"Nay, if that be all," said Henry, "it shall not be lacking. But it must have been much which brought thee to the pass of asking for either."

So saying, he filled a quart flagon from a barrel that stood nigh, and presented it to his guest. Oliver eagerly accepted it, raised it to his head with a trembling hand, imbibed the contents with lips which quivered with emotion, and, though the potation was as thin as he had requested, so much was he exhausted

with the combined fears of alarm and of former revelry, that when he placed the flagon on the oak table, he uttered a deep sigh of satisfaction, and remained silent.

"Well, now you have had your draught, gossip," said the Smith, "what is it you want? Where are those that threatened you? I could see no one."

"No—but there were twenty chased me into the wynd," said Oliver. "But when they saw us together, you know they lost the courage that brought all of them upon one of us."

"Nay, do not trifle, friend Oliver," replied his host; "my mood lies not that way."

"I jest not, by St John of Perth. I have been stayed and foully outraged (gliding his hand sensitively over the place affected) by mad Robin of Rothsay, roaring Ramorny, and the rest of them. They made me drink a firkin of Malvoisie."

"Thou speakest folly, man—Ramorny is sick nigh to death, as the pottercarrier everywhere reports; they and he cannot surely rise at midnight to do such frolics."

"I cannot tell," replied Oliver; "but I saw the party by torch-light, and I can make bodily oath to the bonnets I made for them since last Innocent's. They are of a quaint device, and I should know my own stitch."

"Well, thou mayst have had wrong," answered Henry. "If thou art in real danger, I will cause them get a bed for thee here. But you must fill it presently, for I am not in the humour of talking."

"Nay, I would thank thee for my quarters for a night, only my Maudie will be angry—that is, not angry, for that I care not for—but the truth is, she is over anxious on a revel night like this, knowing my humour is like thine, for a word and a blow."

"Why, then, go home," said the Smith, "and show her that her treasure is in safety, Master Oliver—the streets are quiet—and, to speak a blunt word, I would be alone."

"Nay, but I have things to speak with thee about of moment," replied Oliver, who, afraid to stay, seemed yet unwilling to go. "There has been a stir in our city council about the affair of

St Valentine's Even. The Provost told me not four hours since, that the Douglas and he had agreed that the feud should be decided by a yeoman on either part, and that our acquaintance, the Devil's Dick, was to wave his gentry, and take up the cause for Douglas and the nobles, and that you or I should fight for the Fair City. Now, though I am the elder burgess, yet I am willing, for the love and kindness we have always borne to each other, to give thee the precedence, and content myself with the humbler office of stickler."*

Henry Smith, though angry, could scarce forbear a smile.

"If it is that which breaks thy quiet, and keeps thee out of thy bed at midnight, I will make the matter easy. Thou shalt not lose the advantage offered thee. I have fought a score of duels—far, far too many. Thou hast, I think, only encountered with thy wooden Soldan—it

* The seconds in ancient single combats were so called, from the white sticks which they carried, in emblem of their duty, to see fair play between the combatants.

were unjust—unfair—unkind—in me to abuse thy friendly offer. So go home, good fellow, and let not the fear of losing honour disturb thy slumbers. Rest assured that thou shalt answer the challenge, as good right thou hast, having had injury from this rough-rider."

"Gramercy, and thank thee kindly," said Oliver, much embarrassed by his friend's unexpected deference; "thou art the good friend I have always thought thee. But I have as much friendship for Henry Smith, as he for Oliver Proudfute. I swear by St John, I will not fight in this quarrel to thy prejudice. So, having said so, I am beyond the reach of temptation, since thou wouldst not have me mansworn, though it were to fight twenty duels."

"Hark thee," said the Smith, "acknowledge thou art afraid, Oliver; tell the honest truth, at once, otherwise I leave thee to make the best of thy quarrel."

"Nay, good gossip," replied the Bonnet-maker, "thou knowest I am never afraid. But, in sooth, this is a desperate ruffian; and as I have a wife—poor Maudie, thou knowest—and a small family, and thou——"

"And I," interrupted Henry, hastily, "have none, and never shall have."

"Why, truly—such being the case—I would rather thou fought'st this combat than I."

"Now, by our holidame, gossip," answered the Smith, "thou art easily gulled. Know, thou silly fellow, that Sir Patrick Charteris, who is ever a merry man, hath but jested with thee. Dost thou think he would venture the honour of the city on thy head? or that I would yield thee the precedence in which such a matter was to be disputed? Lack-a-day, go home, let Maudie tie a warm nightcap on thy head; get thee a warm breakfast, and a cup of distilled waters, and thou wilt be in case to-morrow to fight thy wooden dromond, or Soldan, as thou call'st him, the only thing thou wilt ever lay downright blow upon."

"Ay, say'st thou so, comrade?" answered Oliver, much relieved, yet deeming it necessary to seem in part offended. "I care not for thy dogged humour; it is well for thee thou canst not wake my patience to the point of falling foul. Enough—we are gossips, and this house

is thine. Why should the two best blades in Perth clash with each other? What! I know thy rugged humour, and can forgive it.—But is the feud really soldered up?"

"As completely as ever hammer fixed rivet," said the Smith. "The town hath given the Johnston a purse of gold, for not ridding them of a troublesome fellow called Oliver Proudfute, when he had him at his mercy; and this purse of gold buys for the Provost the Sleepless Isle, which the King grants him, for the King pays all in the long run. And thus, Sir Patrick gets the comely Inch, which is opposite to his dwelling, and all honour is saved on both sides, for what is given to the Provost, is given, you understand, to the town. Besides all this, the Douglas has left Perth to march against the Southron, whom men say are called into the Marches by the false Earl of March. So the Fair City is quit of him and his cumber."

"But, in St John's name, how came all that about?" said Oliver; "and no one spoken to about it?"

"Why, look thee, friend Oliver, this I take to have been the case. The fellow whom I

cropped of a hand, is now said to have been a servant of Sir John Ramorny's, who hath fled to his motherland of Fife, to which Sir John himself is also to be banished, with full consent of every honest man. Now, anything which brings in Sir John Ramorny, touches a much greater man—I think Simon Glover told as much to Sir Patrick Charteris. If it be as I guess, I have reason to thank Heaven, and all the saints, I stabbed him not upon the ladder when I made him prisoner."

"And I too thank Heaven, and all the saints, most devoutly," said Oliver. "I was behind thee, thou knowest, and——"

"No more of that, if thou be'st wise—There are laws against striking princes," said the Smith; "best not handle the horse-shoe till it cools. All is hushed up now."

"If this be so," said Oliver, partly disconcerted, but still more relieved, by the intelligence he received from his better informed friend, "I have reason to complain of Sir Patrick Charteris for jesting with the honour of an honest burgess, being as he is, Provost of our town."

"Do, Oliver; challenge him to the field, and he will bid his yeoman loose his dogs on thee.—But come, night wears apace, will you be shogging?"

"Nay, I had one word more to say to thee, good gossip. But first, another cup of your cold ale."

"Pest on thee, for a fool! Thou makest me wish thee where cold liquors are a scarce commodity.—There, swill the barrelful an thou wilt."

Oliver took the second flagon, but drank, or rather seemed to drink, very slowly, in order to gain time for considering how he should introduce his second subject of conversation, which seemed rather delicate for the Smith's present state of irritability. At length, nothing better occurred to him than to plunge into the subject at once, with, "I have seen Simon Glover to-day, gossip."

"Well," said the Smith, in a low, deep, and stern tone of voice, "and if thou hast, what is that to me?"

"Nothing—nothing," answered the appalled

Bonnet-maker. "Only I thought you might like to know that he questioned me close, if I had seen thee on St Valentine's day, after the uproar at the Dominicans', and in what company thou wert."

"And I warrant thou told'st him thou met'st me with a glee-woman, in the mirk loaning yonder?"

"Thou know'st, Henry, I have no gift at lying; but I made it all up with him."

"As how, I pray you?" said the Smith.

"Marry, thus—Father Simon, said I, you are an old man, and know not the quality of us, in whose veins youth is like quicksilver. You think now, he cares about this girl, said I, and, perhaps, that he has her somewhere here in Perth in a corner? No such matter; I know, said I, and I will make oath to it, that she left his house early next morning for Dundee. Ha! have I helped thee at need?"

"Truly, I think thou hast, and if anything could add to my grief and vexation at this moment, it is, that when I am so deep in the mire, an ass like thee should place his clumsy hoof

on my head, to sink me entirely. Come, away with thee, and mayst thou have such luck as thy meddling humour deserves, and then, I think, thou wilt be found with a broken neck in the next gutter—Come, get you out, or I will put you to the door with head and shoulders forward."

"Ha, ha!" exclaimed Oliver, laughing with some constraint; "thou art such a groom! But in sadness, gossip Henry, wilt thou not take a turn with me to my own house, in the Meal Vennal?"

"Curse thee, no," answered the Smith.

"I will bestow the wine on thee, if thou wilt go," said Oliver.

"I will bestow the cudgel on thee, if thou stay'st," said Henry.

"Nay, then, I will don thy buff-coat and cap of steel, and walk with thy swashing step, and whistling thy pibroch of, 'Broken Bones at Loncarty;' and if they take me for thee, there dare not four of them come near me."

"Take all, or anything thou wilt, in the fiend's name! only be gone."

"Well, well, Hal, we shall meet when thou art in better humour," said Oliver, who had put on the dress.

"Go—and may I never see thy coxcombly face again."

Oliver at last relieved his host by swaggering off, imitating, as well as he could, the sturdy step and outward gesture of his redoubted companion, and whistling a pibroch, composed on the rout of the Danes at Loncarty, which he had picked up from its being a favourite of the Smith's, whom he made a point of imitating as far as he could. But as the innocent, though conceited fellow, stepped out from the entrance of the wynd, where it communicated with the High Street, he received a blow from behind, against which his head-piece was no defence, and he fell dead upon the spot; an attempt to mutter the name of Henry, to whom he always looked for protection, quivering upon his dying tongue.

CHAPTER V.

Nay, I will fit you for a young Prince.

Falstaff.

We return to the revellers, who had, half an hour before, witnessed, with such boisterous applause, Oliver's feat of agility, being the last which the poor Bonnet-maker was ever to exhibit, and at the hasty retreat which had followed it, animated by their wild shout. After they had laughed their fill, they passed on their mirthful path, in frolic and jubilee, stopping and frightening some of the people whom they met; but, it must be owned, without doing them any serious injury, either in their persons or feelings. At length, tired with his rambles, their chief gave a signal to his merrymen to close around him.

"We, my brave hearts and wise councillors, are," he said, "the real King over all in Scot-

land that is worth commanding. We sway the hours when the wine-cup circulates, and when beauty becomes kind, when Frolic is awake, and Gravity snoring upon his pallet. We leave to our vicegerent, King Robert, the weary task of controlling ambitious nobles, gratifying greedy clergymen, subduing wild Highlanders, and composing deadly feuds. And since our empire is one of joy and pleasure, meet it is that we should haste with all our forces, to the rescue of such as own our sway, when they chance, by evil fortune, to become the prisoners of care and hypochondriac malady. I speak in relation chiefly to Sir John, whom the vulgar call Ramorny. We have not seen him since the onslaught of Curfew Street, and though we know he was somedeal hurt in that matter, we cannot see why he should not do homage in leal and duteous sort.—Here, you, our Calabash King-at-arms, did you legally summon Sir John to his part of this evening's revels?"

"I did, my lord."

"And did you acquaint him that we have for this night suspended his sentence of banish-

ment, that since higher powers have settled that part, we must at least take a mirthful leave of an old friend."

"I so delivered it, my lord," answered the mimic herald.

"And sent he not a word in writing, he that piques himself upon being so great a clerk?"

"He was in bed, my lord, and I might not see him. So far as I hear, he hath lived very retired, harmed with some bodily bruises, malcontent with your Highness's displeasure, and doubting insult in the streets, he having had a narrow escape from the burgesses, when the churls pursued him and his two servants into the Dominican Convent. The servants, too, have been removed to Fife, lest they should tell tales."

"Why, it was wisely done," said the Prince, —who, we need not inform the intelligent reader, had a better title to be so called, than arose from the humours of the evening,—"it was prudently done to keep light-tongued companions out of the way. But Sir John's absent-

ing himself from our solemn revels, so long before decreed, is flat mutiny, and disclamation of allegiance. Or, if the knight be really the prisoner of illness and melancholy, we must ourself grace him with a visit, seeing there can be no better cure for those maladies than our own presence, and a gentle kiss of the calabash. —Forward, ushers, minstrels, guard, and attendants! Bear on high the great emblem of our dignity—Up with the calabash, I say! and let the merrymen who carry these firkins, which are to supply the wine-cup with their life-blood, be chosen with regard to their state of steadiness. Their burden is weighty and precious, and if the fault is not in our eyes, they seem to us to reel and stagger more than were desirable. Now, move on, sirs, and let our minstrels blow their blithest and boldest."

On they went with tipsy mirth and jollity, the numerous torches flashing their red light against the small windows of the narrow streets, from whence night-capped householders, and sometimes their wives to boot, peeped out by stealth to see what wild wassail disturbed the

peaceful streets at that unwonted hour. At length the jolly train halted before the door of Sir John Ramorny's house, which a small court divided from the street.

Here they knocked, thundered, and hollowed, with many denunciations of vengeance against the recusants, who refused to open the gates. The least punishment threatened was imprisonment in an empty hogshead, within the Massamore of the Prince of Pastimes' feudal palace, videlicet, the ale-cellar. But Eviot, Ramorny's page, heard and knew well the character of the intruders who knocked so boldly, and thought it better, considering his master's condition, to make no answer at all, in hopes that the revel would pass on, than to attempt to deprecate their proceedings, which he knew would be to no purpose. His master's bedroom looking into a little garden, his page hoped he might not be disturbed by the noise; and he was confident in the strength of the outward gate, upon which he resolved they should beat till they tired themselves, or till the tone of their drunken humour should change. The revellers accordingly seemed likely to exhaust

themselves in the noise they made by shouting and beating the door, when their mock Prince (alas! too really such) upbraided them as lazy and dull followers of the god of wine and of mirth.

"Bring forward," he said, "our key—yonder it lies, and apply it to this rebellious gate."

The key he pointed at was a large beam of wood, left on one side of the street, with the usual neglect of order characteristic of a Scottish borough of the period

The shouting men of Ind instantly raised it in their arms, and supporting it by their united strength, ran against the door with such force, that hasp, hinge, and staple jingled, and gave fair promise of yielding. Eviot did not choose to wait the extremity of this battery; he came forth into the court, and after some momentary questions for form's sake, caused the porter to undo the gate, as if he had for the first time recognised the midnight visitors.

"False slave of an unfaithful master," said the Prince, "where is our disloyal subject, Sir John Ramorny, who has proved recreant to our summons?"

"My lord," said Eviot, bowing at once to the real and to the assumed dignity of the leader; "my master is just now very much indisposed—he has taken an opiate—and—your Highness must excuse me if I do my duty to him in saying, he cannot be spoken with without danger of his life."

"Tush! tell me not of danger, Master Teviot—Cheviot—Eviot—what is it they call thee?—But show me thy master's chamber, or rather undo me the door of his lodging, and I will make a good guess at it myself.—Bear high the calabash, my brave followers, and see that you spill not a drop of the liquor, which Dan Bacchus has sent for the cure of all diseases of the body, and cares of the mind. Advance it, I say, and let us see the holy rind which encloses such precious liquor."

The Prince made his way into the house accordingly, and, acquainted with its interior, ran up stairs, followed by Eviot, in vain imploring silence, and, with the rest of the rabble rout, burst into the room of the wounded master of the lodging.

He who has experienced the sensation of being compelled to sleep in spite of racking bodily pains, by the administration of a strong opiate, and of having been again startled by noise and violence, out of the unnatural state of insensibility in which he had been plunged by the potency of the medicine, may be able to imagine the confused and alarmed state of Sir John Ramorny's mind, and the agony of his body, which acted and re-acted upon each other. If we add to these feelings the consciousness of a criminal command, sent forth and in the act of being executed, it may give us some idea of an awakening, to which, in the mind of the party, eternal sleep would be a far preferable doom. The groan which he uttered as the first symptom of returning sensation, had something in it so terrific, that even the revellers were awed into momentary silence; and as, from the half recumbent posture in which he had gone to sleep, he looked around the room, filled with fantastic shapes, rendered still more so by his disturbed intellects, he muttered to himself,—

"It is thus then, after all, and the legend is true! These are fiends, and I am condemned

for ever! The fire is not external, but I feel it —I feel it at my heart—burning as if the seven times heated furnace were doing its work within."

While he cast ghastly looks around him, and struggled to recover some share of recollection, Eviot approached the Prince, and falling on his knees, implored him to allow the apartment to be cleared.

"It may," he said, "cost my master his life."

"Never fear, Cheviot," replied the Duke of Rothsay; "were he at the gates of death, here is what should make the fiends relinquish their prey.—Advance the calabash, my masters."

"It is death for him to taste it in his present state," said Eviot; "if he drinks wine he dies."

"Some one must drink it for him, he shall be cured vicariously—and may our great Dan Bacchus deign to Sir John Ramorny the comfort, the elevation of heart, the lubrication of lungs, and lightness of fancy, which are his choicest gifts, while the faithful follower, who quaffs in his stead, shall have the qualms, the sickness, the racking

of the nerves, the dimness of the eyes, and the throbbing of the brain, with which our great master qualifies gifts which would else make us too like the gods.—What say you, Eviot? will you be the faithful follower that will quaff in your lord's behalf, and as his representative? Do this, and we will hold ourselves contented to depart, for, methinks, our subject doth look something ghastly."

"I would do anything in my slight power," said Eviot, "to save my master from a draught which may be his death, and your Grace from the sense that you had occasioned it. But here is one who will perform the feat of good-will, and thank your Highness to boot."

"Whom have we here?" said the Prince, "a butcher—and I think fresh from his office. Do butchers ply their craft on Fastern's Eve? Foh, how he smells of blood!"

This was spoken of Bonthron, who, partly surprised at the tumult in the house, where he had expected to find all dark and silent, and partly stupid through the wine, which the wretch had drunk in great quantities, stood in the threshold of the door, staring at the scene

before him, with his buff-coat splashed with blood, and a bloody axe in his hand, exhibiting a ghastly and disgusting spectacle to the revellers, who felt, though they could not tell why, fear as well as dislike at his presence.

As they approached the calabash to this ungainly and truculent-looking savage, and as he extended a hand soiled, as it seemed, with blood, to grasp it, the Prince called out,—

"Down stairs with him! let not the wretch drink in our presence; find him some other vessel than our holy calabash, the emblem of our revels—a swine's trough were best, if it could be come by. Away with him! let him be drenched to purpose, in atonement for his master's sobriety.—Leave me alone with Sir John Ramorny and his page; by my honour, I like not his looks."

The attendants of the Prince left the apartment, and Eviot alone remained.

"I fear," said the Prince, approaching the bed in different form from that which he had hitherto used—"I fear, my dear Sir John, that this visit has been unwelcome; but it is your own

fault. Although you know our old wont, and were yourself participant of our schemes for the evening, you have not come near us since St Valentine's—it is now Fastern's Even, and the desertion is flat disobedience and treason to our kingdom of mirth, and the statutes of the calabash."

Ramorny raised his head, and fixed a wavering eye upon the Prince; then signed to Eviot to give him something to drink. A large cup of ptisan was presented by the page, which the sick man swallowed with eager and trembling haste. He then repeatedly used the stimulating essence left for the purpose by the leech, and seemed to collect his scattered senses.

"Let me feel your pulse, dear Ramorny," said the Prince; "I know something of that craft.—How? Do you offer me the left hand, Sir John?—that is neither according to the rules of medicine nor of courtesy."

"The right has already done its last act in your Highness' service," muttered the patient, in a low and broken tone.

"How mean you by that?" said the Prince "I am aware thy follower, Black Quentin, lost

a hand; but he can steal with the other as much as will bring him to the gallows, so his fate cannot be much altered."

'It is not that fellow who has had the loss in your Grace's service—it is I—John of Ramorny."

"You!" said the Prince; "you jest with me, or the opiate still masters your reason."

"If the juice of all the poppies in Egypt were blended in one draught," said Ramorny, "it would lose influence over me when I look upon this." He drew his right arm from beneath the cover of the bed-clothes, and extending it towards the Prince, wrapped as it was in dressings, "Were these undone and removed," he said, "your Highness would see that a bloody stump is all that remains of a hand ever ready to unsheath the sword at your Grace's slightest bidding."

Rothsay started back in horror. "This," he said, "must be avenged."

"It is avenged in small part," said Ramorny; "that is, I thought I saw Bonthron but now—or was it that the dream of hell that

first arose in my mind when I awakened, summoned up an image so congenial? Eviot, call the miscreant,—that is, if he is fit to appear."

Eviot retired, and presently returned with Bonthron, whom he had rescued from the penance, to him no unpleasing infliction, of a second calabash of wine, the brute having gorged the first without much apparent alteration in his demeanour.

"Eviot," said the Prince, "let not that beast come nigh me. My soul recoils from him in fear and disgust; there is something in his looks alien from my nature, and which I shudder at as at a loathsome snake, from which my instinct revolts."

"First hear him speak, my lord," answered Ramorny; "unless a wineskin were to talk, nothing could use fewer words.—Hast thou dealt with him, Bonthron?"

The savage raised the axe which he still held in his hand, and brought it down again edgeways.

"Good. How knew you your man?—the night, I am told, is dark."

"By sight and sound, garb, gait, and whistle."

"Enough, vanish!—and, Eviot, let him have gold and wine to his brutish contentment.—Vanish!—and go thou with him."

"And whose death is achieved?" said the Prince, released from the feelings of disgust and horror under which he suffered while the assassin was in presence. "I trust this is but a jest? Else must I call it a rash and savage deed. Who has had the hard lot to be butchered by this bloody and brutal slave?"

"One little better than himself," said the patient; "a wretched artizan, to whom, however, fate gave the power of reducing Ramorny to a mutilated cripple—a curse go with his base spirit!—his miserable life is but to my revenge what a drop of water would be to a furnace. I must speak briefly, for my ideas again wander; it is only the necessity of the moment which keeps them together, as a thong combines a handful of arrows. You are in danger, my lord—I speak it with certainty—you have braved Douglas, and offended your uncle—dis-

pleased your father—though that were a trifle, were it not for the rest."

"I am sorry I have displeased my father," said the Prince, (entirely diverted from so insignificant a thing as the slaughter of an artizan, by the more important subject touched upon,) "if indeed it be so. But if I live, the strength of the Douglas shall be broken, and the craft of Albany shall little avail him!"

"Ay—*if*—*if*. My lord," said Ramorny, "with such opposites as you have, you must not rest upon *if* or *but*—you must resolve at once to slay or be slain."

"How mean you, Ramorny? your fever makes you rave," answered the Duke of Rothsay.

"No, my lord," said Ramorny, "were my frenzy at the highest, the thoughts that pass through my mind at this moment would qualify it. It may be that regret for my own loss has made me desperate; that anxious thoughts for your Highness's safety have made me nourish bold designs; but I have all the judgment with which Heaven has gifted me, when I tell you, that if ever you would brook

the Scottish crown, nay, more, if ever you would see another Saint Valentine's Day, you must——"

"What is it that I must do, Ramorny?"—said the Prince, with an air of dignity; "nothing unworthy of myself, I hope?"

"Nothing, certainly, unworthy or misbecoming a Prince of Scotland, if the blood-stained annals of our country tell the tale truly; but that which may well shock the nerves of a prince of mimes and merry-makers."

"Thou art severe, Sir John Ramorny," said the Duke of Rothsay, with an air of displeasure; "but thou hast dearly bought a right to censure us by what thou hast lost in our cause."

"My Lord of Rothsay," said the knight, "the chirurgeon who dressed this mutilated stump, told me that the more I felt the pain his knife and brand inflicted, the better was my chance of recovery. I shall not, therefore, hesitate to hurt your feelings, while by doing so I may be able to bring you to a sense of what is necessary for your safety. Your Grace has been the pupil of mirthful folly too long; you

must now assume manly policy, or be crushed like a butterfly, on the bosom of the flower you are sporting on."

"I think I know your cast of morals, Sir John; you are weary of merry folly,—the churchmen call it vice,—and long for a little serious crime. A murder, now, or a massacre, would enhance the flavour of debauch, as the taste of the olive gives zest to wine. But my worst acts are but merry malice; I have no relish for the bloody trade, and abhor to see or hear of its being acted even on the meanest caitiff. Should I ever fill the throne, every Scots lad shall have his flagon in one hand, and the other around his lass's neck, and manhood shall be tried by kisses and bumpers, not by dirks and dourlachs; and they shall write on my grave, 'Here lies Robert, fourth of his name. He won not battles like Robert the First. He rose not from a count to a king like Robert the Second. He founded not churches like Robert the Third, but was contented to live and die King of good fellows!' Of all my two centuries of ancestors, I would only emulate the fame of

'Old King Coul,
Who had a brown bowl.'"

"My gracious lord," said Ramorny, "let me remind you, that your joyous revels involve serious evils. If I had lost this hand in fighting to attain for your Grace some important advantage over your too powerful enemies, the loss would never have grieved me. But to be reduced from helmet and steel-coat, to biggen and gown, in a night-brawl——"

"Why, there again, now, Sir John—" interrupted the reckless Prince—"How canst thou be so unworthy as to be for ever flinging thy bloody hand in my face, as the ghost of Gaskhall threw his head at Sir William Wallace? Bethink thee, thou art more unreasonable than Fawdyon himself; for wight Wallace had swept his head off in somewhat a hasty humour, whereas I would gladly stitch thy hand on again, were that possible. And, hark thee, since that cannot be, I will get thee such a substitute as the steel hand of the old Knight of Carselogie, with which he greeted his friends, caressed his wife, braved his antagonists, and did all that might be done by a hand of flesh and blood, in offence or defence. Depend on it, John Ramor-

ny, we have much that is superfluous about us. Man can see with one eye, hear with one ear, touch with one hand, smell with one nostril; and why we should have two of each, (unless to supply an accidental loss or injury,) I for one am at a loss to conceive."

Sir John Ramorny turned from the Prince with a low groan.

"Nay, Sir John," said the Duke, "I am quite serious. You know the truth touching the legend of Steelhand of Carselogie better than I, since he was your own neighbour. In his time, that curious engine could only be made in Rome; but I will wager an hundred merks with you, that, let the Perth armourer have the use of it for a pattern, Henry of the Wynd will execute as complete an imitation as all the smiths in Rome could accomplish, with all the cardinals to bid a blessing on the work."

"I could venture to accept your wager, my lord," answered Ramorny, bitterly, "but there is no time for foolery. You have dismissed me from your service, at command of your uncle?"

"At command of my father," answered the Prince.

"Upon whom your uncle's commands are imperative," replied Ramorny. "I am a disgraced man, thrown aside, as I may now fling away my right hand glove, as a thing useless. Yet my head might help you, though my hand be gone. Is your Grace disposed to listen to me for one word of serious import?—for I am much exhausted, and feel my force sinking under me."

"Speak your pleasure," said the Prince; "thy loss binds me to hear thee; thy bloody stump is a sceptre to control me. Speak, then, but be merciful in thy strength of privilege."

"I will be brief, for mine own sake as well as thine; indeed I have but little to say. Douglas places himself immediately at the head of his vassals. He will assemble, in the name of King Robert, thirty thousand Borderers, whom he will shortly after lead into the interior, to demand that the Duke of Rothsay receive, or rather restore, his daughter to the rank and privileges of his Duchess. King Robert will yield to any conditions which may secure peace—What will the Duke do?"

"The Duke of Rothsay loves peace," said the Prince, haughtily; "but he never feared war. Ere he takes back yonder proud peat to his table and his bed, at the command of her father, Douglas must be King of Scotland."

"Be it so—but even this is the less pressing peril, especially as it threatens open violence, for the Douglas works not in secret."

"What is there which presses, and keeps us awake at this late hour? I am a weary man, thou a wounded one, and the very tapers are blinking, as if tired of our conference."

"Tell me, then, who is it that rules this kingdom of Scotland?" said Ramorny.

"Robert, third of the name," said the Prince, raising his bonnet as he spoke; "and long may he sway the sceptre!"

"True, and amen," answered Ramorny; "but who sways King Robert, and dictates almost every measure which the good King pursues?"

"My Lord of Albany, you would say," replied the Prince. "Yes, it is true my father is guided almost entirely by the counsels of his

brother; nor can we blame him in our consciences, Sir John Ramorny, for little help hath he had from his son."

"Let us help him now, my lord," said Ramorny. "I am possessor of a dreadful secret —Albany hath been trafficking with me, to join him in taking your Grace's life! He offers full pardon for the past—high favour for the future."

"How, man—my life? I trust, though, thou dost only mean my kingdom? It were impious!—he is my father's brother—they sat on the knees of the same father—lay in the bosom of the same mother—Out on thee, man! what follies they make thy sick-bed believe!"

"Believe, indeed?" said Ramorny. "It is new to me to be termed credulous. But the man through whom Albany communicated his temptations, is one whom all will believe, so soon as he hints at mischief—even the medicaments which are prepared by his hands have a relish of poison."

"Tush! such a slave would slander a saint," replied the Prince. "Thou art duped for once, Ramorny, shrewd as thou art. My uncle of Al-

bany is ambitious, and would secure for himself and for his house, a larger portion of power and wealth than he ought in reason to desire. But to suppose he would dethrone or slay his brother's son—Fie, Ramorny! put me not to quote the old saw, that evil doers are evil dreaders—It is your suspicion, not your knowledge, which speaks."

"Your Grace is fatally deluded—I will put it to an issue. The Duke of Albany is generally hated for his greed and covetousness—Your highness is, it may be, more beloved than—"

Ramorny stopped, the Prince calmly filled up the blank—"More beloved than I am honoured. It is so I would have it, Ramorny."

"At least," said Ramorny, "you are more beloved than you are feared, and that is no safe condition for a prince. But give me your honour and knightly word that you will not resent what good service I shall do in your behalf, and lend me your signet to engage friends in your name, and the Duke of Albany shall not assume authority in this court, till the wasted hand which once terminated this stump

shall be again united to the body, and acting in obedience to the dictates of my mind."

"You would not venture to dip your hands in royal blood!" said the Prince, sternly.

"Fie, my lord—at no rate—blood need not be shed; life may, nay, will, be extinguished of itself. For want of trimming it with fresh oil, or screening it from a breath of wind, the quivering light will die in the socket. To suffer a man to die is not to kill him."

"True—I had forgot that policy. Well, then, suppose my uncle Albany does not continue to live—I think that must be the phrase—Who then rules the court of Scotland?"

"Robert the Third, with consent, advice, and authority of the most mighty Robert, Duke of Rothsay, Lieutenant of the kingdom, and ALTER EGO; in whose favour, indeed, the good King, wearied with the fatigues and troubles of sovereignty, will, I guess, be well disposed to abdicate. So long live our brave young monarch, King Robert the Fourth!

'*Ille, manu fortis,*
Anglis ludebit in hortis.'"

"And our father and predecessor," said Rothsay, "will he continue to live to pray for us, as our beadsman, by whose favour he holds the privilege of laying his grey hairs in the grave as soon, and no earlier, than the course of nature permits?—or must he also encounter some of those negligences, in consequence of which men cease to continue to live, and exchange the limits of a prison, or of a convent resembling one, for the dark and tranquil cell, where the priests say that the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest?"

"You speak in jest, my lord," replied Ramorny; "to harm the good old King were equally unnatural and impolitic."

"Why shrink from that, man, when thy whole scheme," answered the Prince, in stern displeasure, "is one lesson of unnatural guilt, mixed with short-sighted ambition?—If the King of Scotland can scarcely make head against his nobles, even now when he can hold up before them an unsullied and honourable banner, who would follow a prince that is blackened with the death of an uncle, and the imprisonment of a

father? Why, man, thy policy were enough to revolt a heathen divan, to say nought of the council of a Christian nation.—Thou wert my tutor, Ramorny, and perhaps I might justly upbraid thy lessons and example, for some of the follies which men chide in me. Perhaps, if it had not been for thee, I had not been standing at midnight in this fool's guise, (looking at his dress,) to hear an ambitious profligate propose to me the murder of an uncle, the dethroning of the best of fathers. Since it is my fault, as well as thine, that has sunk me so deep in the gulf of infamy, it were unjust that thou alone shouldst die for it. But dare not to renew this theme to me, on peril of thy life! I will proclaim thee to my father—to Albany—to Scotland—throughout its length and breadth! As many market crosses as are in the land, shall have morsels of the traitor's carcass, who dare counsel such horrors to the Heir of Scotland!—Well hope I, indeed, that the fever of thy wound, and the intoxicating influence of the cordials which act on thy infirm brain, have this night operated on thee, rather than any fixed purpose."

"In sooth, my lord," said Ramorny, "if I have said anything which could so greatly exasperate your Highness, it must have been by excess of zeal, mingled with imbecility of understanding. Surely I, of all men, am least likely to propose ambitious projects with a prospect of advantage to myself. Alas! my only future views must be to exchange lance and saddle for the breviary and the confessional. The convent of Lindores must receive the maimed and impoverished Knight of Ramorny, who will there have ample leisure to meditate upon the text, 'Put not thy faith in princes.'"

"It is a goodly purpose," said the Prince; "and we will not be lacking to promote it. Our separation, I thought, would have been but for a time—It must now be perpetual. Certainly, after such talk as we have held, it were meet that we should live asunder. But the convent of Lindores, or whatever other house receives thee, shall be richly endowed and highly favoured by us.—And now, Sir John of Ramorny, sleep—sleep—and forget this evil-omened conversation, in which the fever of disease

and of wine has rather, I trust, held colloquy, than your own proper thoughts.—Light to the door, Eviot."

A call from Eviot summoned the attendants of the Prince, who had been sleeping on the staircase and hall, exhausted by the revels of the evening.

"Is there none amongst you sober?" said the Duke of Rothsay, disgusted by the appearance of his attendants.

"Not a man—not a man," answered the followers, with a drunken shout; "we are none of us traitors to the Emperor of Merry-makers."

"And are all of you turned into brutes, then?" said the Prince.

"In obedience and imitation of your Grace," answered one fellow; "or, if we are a little behind you, one pull at the pitcher will——"

"Peace, beast!" said the Duke of Rothsay; "are there none of you sober, I say?"

"Yes, my noble liege," was the answer; "here is one false brother, Watkins the Englishman."

"Come hither then, Watkins, and aid me

with a torch—give me a cloak, too, and another bonnet, and take away this trumpery," throwing down his coronet of feathers; "I would I could throw off all my follies as easily.—English Wat, attend me alone, and the rest of you end your revelry, and doff your mumming habits. The holytide is expended, and the Fast has begun."

"Our monarch has abdicated sooner than usual this night," said one of the revel rout; but as the Prince gave no encouragement, such as happened for the time to want the virtue of sobriety, endeavoured to assume it as well as they could, and the whole of the late rioters began to adopt the appearance of a set of decent persons, who, having been surprised into intoxication, endeavour to disguise their condition by assuming a double portion of formality of behaviour. In the interim, the Prince, having made a hasty reform in his dress, was lighted to the door by the only sober man of the company, but, in his progress thither, had wellnigh stumbled over the sleeping bulk of the brute Bonthron.

"How now—is that vile beast in our way once more?" he said, in anger and disgust. "Here, some of you, toss this caitiff into the horse-trough, that for once in his life he may be washed clean."

While the train executed his commands, availing themselves of a fountain which was in the outer court, and while Bonthron underwent a discipline which he was incapable of resisting, otherwise than by some inarticulate groans and snorts, like those of a dying boar, the Prince proceeded on his way to his apartments, in a mansion called the Constable's lodgings, from the house being the property of the Earls of Errol. On the way, to divert his thoughts from more unpleasing matters, the Prince asked his companion how he came to be sober, when the rest of the party had been so much overcome with liquor.

"So please your honour's Grace," replied English Wat, "I confess it was very familiar in me to be sober when it was your Grace's pleasure that your train should be mad drunk; but in respect they were all Scottishmen but my-

self, I thought it argued no policy in getting drunken in their company; seeing that they only endure me even when we are all sober, and if the wine were uppermost, I might tell them a piece of my mind, and be paid with as many stabs as there are skenes in the good company."

"So it is your purpose never to join any of the revels of our household?"

"Under favour, yes; unless it be your Grace's pleasure that the residue of your train should remain one day sober, to admit Will Watkins to get drunk without terror of his life."

"Such occasion may arrive.—Where dost thou serve, Watkins?"

"In the stable, so please you."

"Let our chamberlain bring thee into the household, as a yeoman of the night-watch. I like thy favour, and it is something to have one sober fellow in the house, although he is only such through the fear of death. Attend, therefore, near our person, and thou shalt find sobriety a thriving virtue."

Meantime a load of care and fear added to

the distress of Sir John Ramorny's sick-chamber. His reflections, disordered as they were by the opiate, fell into great confusion when the Prince, in whose presence he had suppressed its effect by strong resistance, had left the apartment. His consciousness, which he had possessed perfectly during the interview, began to be very much disturbed. He felt a general sense that he had incurred a great danger; that he had rendered the Prince his enemy, and that he had betrayed to him a secret which might affect his own life. In this state of mind and body, it was not strange that he should either dream, or else that his diseased organs should become subject to that species of phantasmagoria which is excited by the use of opium. He thought that the shade of Queen Annabella stood by his bedside, and demanded the youth whom she had placed under his charge, simple, virtuous, gay, and innocent.

"Thou hast rendered him reckless, dissolute, and vicious," said the shade of pallid majesty. "Yet I thank thee, John of Ramorny, ungrateful to me, false to thy word, and treacherous to

my hopes. Thy hate shall counteract the evil which thy friendship has done to him. And well do I hope, that, now thou art no longer his counsellor, a bitter penance on earth may purchase my ill-fated child pardon and acceptance in a better world."

Ramorny stretched out his arms after his benefactress, and endeavoured to express contrition and excuse; but the countenance of the apparition became darker and sterner, till it was no longer that of the late Queen, but presented the gloomy and haughty countenance of the Black Douglas—then the timid and sorrowful face of King Robert, who seemed to mourn over the approaching dissolution of his royal house—and then a group of fantastic features, partly hideous, partly ludicrous, which moped, and chattered, and twisted themselves into unnatural and extravagant forms, as if ridiculing his endeavour to obtain an exact idea of their lineaments.

CHAPTER VI.

The morning of Ash Wednesday arose pale and bleak, as usual at this season in Scotland, where the worst and most inclement weather often occurs in the early spring months. It was a severe day of frost, and the citizens had to sleep away the consequences of the preceding holiday's debauchery. The sun had therefore risen for an hour above the horizon, before there was any general appearance of life among the inhabitants of Perth so that it was some time after daybreak, when an early citizen, going to mass, saw the body of the luckless Oliver Proudfute lying on his face, across the kennel, in the manner in which he had fallen, under the blow, as our readers will easily imagine, of Antony

Bonthron, the "boy of the belt," that is, the executioner of the pleasure, of John of Ramorny.

This early citizen was Allan Griffin, so termed because he was master of the Griffin inn; and the alarm which he raised soon brought together, first straggling neighbours, and by and by a concourse of citizens. At first, from the circumstance of the well-known buff-coat, and the crimson feather in the head-piece, the noise arose that it was the stout Smith that lay there slain. This false rumour continued for some time; for the host of the Griffin, who himself had been a magistrate, would not permit the body to be touched or stirred till Bailie Craigdallie arrived, so that the face was not seen.

"This concerns the Fair City, my friends," he said; "and if it is the stout Smith of the Wynd who lies here, the man lives not in Perth, who will not risk land and life to avenge him. Look you, the villains have struck him down behind his back, for there is not a man within ten Scotch miles of Perth, gentle or semple, Highland or Lowland, that would have met him face to face with such evil purpose. Oh, brave

men of Perth! the flower of your manhood has been cut down, and that by a base and treacherous hand!"

A wild cry of fury arose from the people, who were fast assembling.

"We will take him on our shoulders," said a strong butcher; "we will carry him to the King's presence at the Dominican Convent."

"Ay, ay," answered a blacksmith, "neither bolt nor bar shall keep us from the King; neither monk nor mass shall break our purpose. A better armourer never laid hammer on anvil!"

"To the Dominicans! to the Dominicans!" shouted the assembled people.

"Bethink you, burghers," said another citizen, "our King is a good King, and loves us like his children. It is the Douglas and the Duke of Albany, that will not let good King Robert hear the distresses of his people."

"Are we to be slain in our own streets for the King's softness of heart?" said the butcher. "The Bruce did otherwise. If the King will not keep us, we will keep ourselves. Ring the bells backward, every bell of them that is

made of metal. Cry, and spare not, St Johnstoun's hunt is up!"

"Ay," cried another citizen, "and let us to the holds of Albany and the Douglas, and burn them to the ground. Let the fires tell far and near, that Perth knew how to avenge her stout Henry Gow! He has fought a score of times for the Fair City's right—let us show we can fight once to avenge his wrong. Hallo! ho! brave citizens, St Johnstoun's hunt is up!"

This cry, the well-known rallying word amongst the inhabitants of Perth, and seldom heard but on occasions of general uproar, was echoed from voice to voice; and one or two neighbouring steeples, of which the enraged citizens possessed themselves, either by consent of the priests, or in spite of their opposition, began to ring out the ominous alarm notes, in which, as the ordinary succession of the chimes were reversed, the bells were said to be rung backward.

Still, as the crowd thickened, and the roar waxed more universal and louder, Allan Griffin, a burly man, with a deep voice, and well re-

spected among high and low, kept his station as he bestrode the corpse, and called loudly to the multitude to keep back, and wait the arrival of the magistrates.

"We must proceed by order in this matter, my masters; we must have our magistrates at our head. They are duly chosen and elected in our town-hall, good men and true every one; we will not be called rioters, or idle perturbators of the king's peace. Stand you still, and make room, for yonder comes Bailie Craigdallie, ay, and honest Simon Glover, to whom the Fair City is so much bounden. Alas, alas, my kind townsmen! his beautiful daughter was a bride yesternight—this morning the Fair Maid of Perth is a widow before she has been a wife!"

This new theme of sympathy increased the rage and sorrow of the crowd the more, as many women now mingled with them, who echoed back the alarm cry to the men.

"Ay, ay, St Johnstoun's hunt is up. For the Fair Maid of Perth and the brave Henry Gow! Up, up, every one of you, spare not for

your skin-cutting! To the stables! to the stables!—when the horse is gone the man-at-arms is useless—cut off the grooms and yeomen; lame, maim, and stab the horses; kill the base squires and pages. Let these proud knights meet us on their feet if they dare!"

"They dare not, they dare not," answered the men; "their strength is in their horses and armour; and yet the haughty and ungrateful villains have slain a man whose skill as an armourer was never matched in Milan or Venice. To arms! to arms, brave burghers! St Johnstoun's hunt is up!"

Amid this clamour, the magistrates and superior class of inhabitants with difficulty obtained room to examine the body, having with them the town-clerk to take an official protocol, or, as it is still called, a precognition, of the condition in which it was found. To these delays the multitude submitted, with a patience and order which strongly marked the national character of a people, whose resentment has always been the more deeply dangerous, that they will, without relaxing their determination of

vengeance, submit with patience to all delays which are necessary to ensure its attainment. The multitude, therefore, received their magistrates with a loud cry, in which the thirst of revenge was announced, together with the deferential welcome to the patrons by whose direction they expected to obtain it in right and legal fashion.

While these accents of welcome still rung above the crowd, who now filled the whole adjacent streets, receiving and circulating a thousand varying reports, the fathers of the city caused the body to be raised and more closely examined; when it was instantly perceived, and the truth publicly announced, that not the armourer of the Wynd, so highly, and according to the esteemed qualities of the time, so justly popular among his fellow citizens; but a man of far less general estimation, though not without his own value in society, lay murdered before them—the brisk Bonnet-maker, Oliver Proudfute. The resentment of the people had so much turned upon the general opinion, that their frank and brave champion, Henry Gow,

was the slaughtered person, that the contradiction of the report served to cool the general fury, although, if poor Oliver had been recognised at first, there is little doubt that the cry of vengeance would have been as unanimous as in the case of Henry Wynd. The first circulation of the unexpected intelligence even excited a smile among the crowd, so near are the confines of the ludicrous to those of the terrible.

"The murderers have without doubt taken him for Henry Smith," said Griffin, "which must have been a great comfort to him in the circumstances."

But the arrival of other persons on the scene soon restored its deeply tragic character.

CHAPTER VII.

> Who 's that that rings the bell, Diablo, ho!
> The town will rise.———
>
> *Othello.*

The wild rumours which flew through the town, speedily followed by the tolling of the alarm bells, spread general consternation. The nobles and knights, with their followers, gathered in different places of rendezvous, where a defence could best be maintained; and the alarm reached the royal residence, where the young Prince was one of the first to appear to assist, if necessary, in the defence of the old King. The scene of the preceding night ran in his recollection; and, remembering the blood-stained

figure of Bonthron, he conceived, though indistinctly, that his act had been connected with this uproar. The subsequent and more interesting discourse with Sir John Ramorny had, however, been of such an impressive nature, as to obliterate all traces of what he had indistinctly heard of the bloody act of the assassin, excepting a confused recollection that some one or other had been slain. It was chiefly on his father's account that he had assumed arms with his household train, who, clad in bright armour, and bearing lances in their hands, made now a figure very different from that of the preceding night, when they appeared as intoxicated Bacchanalians. The kind old monarch received this mark of filial attachment with tears of gratitude, and proudly presented his son to his brother Albany, who entered shortly afterwards. He took them each by the hand.

"Now are we three Robin Stewarts," he said, "as inseparable as the holy Trefoil; and, as they say the wearer of that sacred herb mocks at magical delusion, so we, while we are true

to each other, may set malice and enmity at defiance."

The brother and son kissed the kind hand which pressed theirs, while Robert III. expressed his confidence in their affection. The kiss of the youth was, for the time, sincere; that of the brother was the salute of the apostate Judas.

In the meantime the bell of Saint John's church alarmed, amongst others, the inhabitants of Curfew Street. In the house of Simon Glover, old Dorothy Glover, as she was called, (for she also took name from the trade she practised, under her master's auspices,) was the first to catch the sound. Though somewhat deaf upon ordinary occasions, her ear for bad news was as sharp as a kite's scent for carrion; for Dorothy, otherwise an industrious, faithful, and even affectionate creature, had that strong appetite for collecting and retailing sinister intelligence, which is often to be marked in the lower classes. Little accustomed to be listened to, they love the attention which a tragic tale ensures to the bearer, and enjoy, perhaps, the temporary equality to which misfortune reduces

those who are ordinarily accounted their superiors. Dorothy had no sooner possessed herself of a slight packet of the rumours which were flying abroad, than she bounced into her master's bed-room, who had taken the privilege of age and the holytide to sleep longer than usual.

"There he lies, honest man!" said Dorothy, half in a screeching, and half in a wailing tone of sympathy,—"There he lies; his best friend slain, and he knowing as little about it as the babe new born, that kens not life from death."

"How now!" said the Glover, starting up out of his bed,—"What is the matter, old woman? is my daughter well?"

"Old woman!" said Dorothy, who, having her fish hooked, chose to let him play a little. "I am not so old," said she, flouncing out of the room, "as to bide in the place till a man rises from his naked bed—"

And presently she was heard at a distance in the parlour beneath, melodiously singing to the scrubbing of her own broom.

"Dorothy—screech-owl—devil,—say but my daughter is well!"

"I *am* well, my father," answered the Fair Maid of Perth, speaking from her bed-room, "perfectly well; but what, for our Lady's sake, is the matter? The bells ring backward, and there is shrieking and crying in the streets."

"I will presently know the cause. Here, Conachar, come speedily and tie my points.—I forgot—the Highland loon is far beyond Fortingall.—Patience, daughter, I will presently bring you news."

"Ye need not hurry yourself for that, Simon Glover," quoth the obdurate old woman; "the best and the worst of it may be tauld before you could hobble over your door-stane. I ken the haill story abroad; for, thought I, our goodman is so wilful, that he'll be for banging out to the tuilzie, be the cause what it like; and sae I maun e'en stir my shanks, and learn the cause of all this, or he will hae his auld nose in the midst of it, and maybe get it nipt off before he knows what for."

"And what *is* the news, then, old woman?" said the impatient Glover, still busying himself with the hundred points or latchets which were the means of attaching the doublet to the hose.

Dorothy suffered him to proceed in his task, till she conjectured it must be nearly accomplished; and foresaw that, if she told not the secret herself, her master would be abroad to seek in person for the cause of the disturbance. She, therefore, hollowed out—" Aweel, aweel, ye canna say it is my fault, if you hear ill news before you have been at the morning mass. I would have kept it from ye till ye had heard the priest's word; but since you must hear it, you have e'en lost the truest friend that ever gave hand to another, and Perth maun mourn for the bravest burgher that ever took a blade in hand."

" Harry Smith! Harry Smith!" exclaimed the father and the daughter at once.

" Oh, ay, there ye hae it at last," said Dorothy; " and whase fault was it but your ain?—you made such a peace of work about his companying with a glee woman, as if he had companied with a Jewess!"

Dorothy would have gone on long enough, but her master exclaimed to his daughter, who was still in her own apartment, " It is nonsense, Catharine—all the dotage of an old fool.

No such thing has happened. I will bring you the true tidings in a moment;" and snatching up his staff, the old man hurried out past Dorothy, and into the street, where the throng of people were rushing towards the High Street. Dorothy, in the meantime, kept muttering to herself, "Thy father is a wise man, take his ain word for it. He will come next by some scathe in the hobbleshow, and then it will be, Dorothy, get the lint, and, Dorothy, spread the plaster; but now it is nothing but nonsense, and a lie, and impossibility, that can come out of Dorothy's mouth—Impossible! Does auld Simon think that Harry Smith's head was as hard as his stithy, and a haill clan of Highlandmen dinging at him?"

Here she was interrupted by a figure like an angel, who came wandering by her with wild eye, cheek deadly pale, hair dishevelled, and an apparent want of consciousness, which terrified the old woman out of her discontented humour.

"Our Lady bless my bairn," said she. "What look you sae wild for?"

"Did you not say some one was dead?" said

Catharine, with a frightful uncertainty of utterance, as if her organs of speech and hearing served her but imperfectly.

"Dead, hinny! Ay, ay, dead eneugh; ye'll no hae him to gloom at ony mair."

"Dead!" repeated Catharine, still with the same uncertainty of voice and manner. "Dead —slain—and by Highlanders?"

"I'se warrant by Highlanders,—the lawless loons. Wha is it else that kills maist of the folks about, unless now and than when the burghers take a tirrivie, and kill ane another, or whiles that the knights and nobles shed blood? But I'se uphauld it's been the Highlandmen this bout. The man was no in Perth, laird or loon, durst have faced Henry Smith man to man. There's been sair odds against him; ye'll see that when it's looked into."

"Highlanders!" repeated Catharine, as if haunted by some idea which troubled her senses. "Highlanders!—Oh, Conachar! Conachar!"

"Indeed, and I daresay you have lighted on the very man, Catharine. They quarrelled, as you saw, on the St Valentine's Even, and had

a warstle. A Highlandman has a long memory for the like of that. Gie him a cuff at Martinmas, and his cheek will be tingling at Whitsunday. But what could have brought down the lang-legged loons to do their bloody wark within burgh?"

"Woe's me, it was I," said Catharine; "it was I brought the Highlanders down—I that sent for Conachar—ay, they have lain in wait—but it was I that brought them within reach of their prey. But I will see with my own eyes—and then—something we will do. Say to my father I will be back anon."

"Are ye distraught, lassie?" shouted Dorothy, as Catharine made past her towards the street door. "You would not gang into the street with the hair hanging down your haffets in that guise, and you kenn'd for the Fair Maid of Perth?—Mass, but she's out in the street, come o't what like, and the auld Glover will be as mad as if I could withhold her, will she nill she, flyte she fling she.—This is a brave morning for an Ash-Wednesday!—What's to be done? If I were to seek my master among the multitude, I were

like to be crushed beneath their feet, and little moan made for the old woman—And am I to run after Catharine, who ere this is out of sight, and far lighter of foot than I am?—so I will just down the gate to Nicol Barber's, and tell him a' about it."

While the trusty Dorothy was putting her prudent resolve into execution, Catharine ran through the streets of Perth in a manner, which at another moment would have brought on her the attention of every one, who saw her hurrying on with a reckless impetuosity, wildly and widely different from the ordinary decency and composure of her step and manner, and without the plaid, scarf, or mantle, which "women of good," of fair character and decent rank, universally carried around them, when they went abroad. But distracted as the people were, every one inquiring or telling the cause of the tumult, and most recounting it different ways, the negligence of her dress, and discomposure of her manner, made no impression on any one; and she was suffered to press forward on the path she had chosen, without attracting more

notice than the other females, who, stirred by anxious curiosity or fear, had come out to inquire the cause of an alarm so general—it might be to seek for friends, for whose safety they were interested.

As Catharine passed along, she felt all the wild influence of the agitating scene, and it was with difficulty she forbore from repeating the cries of lamentation and alarm, which were echoed around her. In the meantime, she rushed rapidly on, embarrassed like one in a dream, with a strange sense of dreadful calamity, the precise nature of which she was unable to define, but which implied the terrible consciousness, that the man who loved her so fondly, whose good qualities she so highly esteemed, and whom she now felt to be dearer, than perhaps she would before have acknowledged to her own bosom, was murdered, and most probably by her means. The connexion betwixt Henry's supposed death, and the descent of Conachar and his followers, though adopted by her in a moment of extreme and engrossing emotion, was sufficiently probable to have been received

for truth, even if her understanding had been at leisure to examine its credibility. Without knowing what she sought, except the general desire to know the worst of the dreadful report, she hurried forward to the very spot, which of all others her feelings of the preceding day would have induced her to avoid.

Who would, upon the evening of Shrove-tide, have persuaded the proud, the timid, the shy, the rigidly decorous Catharine Glover, that before mass on Ash Wednesday she should rush through the streets of Perth, making her way amidst tumult and confusion, with her hair unbound, and her dress disarranged, to seek the house of that same lover, who, she had reason to believe, had so grossly and indelicately neglected and affronted her, as to pursue a low and licentious amour! Yet so it was; and her eagerness taking, as if by instinct, the road which was most free, she avoided the High Street, where the pressure was greatest, and reached the wynd by the narrow lanes on the northern skirt of the town, through which Henry Smith had formerly escorted Louise. But even these

comparatively lonely passages were now astir with passengers, so general was the alarm. Catharine Glover made her way through them, however, while such as observed her looked on each other, and shook their heads in sympathy with her distress. At length, without any distinct idea of her own purpose, she stood before her lover's door, and knocked for admittance.

The silence which succeeded the echoing of her hasty summons increased the alarm, which had induced her to take this desperate measure.

"Open,—open, Henry!" she cried. "Open, if you yet live!—Open, if you would not find Catharine Glover dead upon your threshold!"

As she cried thus franticly, to ears which she was taught to believe were stopped by death, the lover she invoked opened the door in person, just in time to prevent her sinking on the ground. The extremity of his ecstatic joy upon an occasion so unexpected, was qualified only by the wonder which forbade him to believe it real, and by his alarm at the closed eyes, half-opened and blanched lips, total absence of

complexion, and apparently total cessation of breathing.

Henry had remained at home, in spite of the general alarm, which had reached his ears for a considerable time, fully determined to put himself in the way of no brawls that he could avoid; and it was only in compliance with a summons from the Magistrates, which, as a burgher, he was bound to obey, that, taking his sword and buckler from the wall, he was about to go forth, for the first time unwillingly, to pay his service, as his tenure bound him.

"It is hard," he said, "to be put forward in all the town feuds, when the fighting work is so detestable to Catharine. I am sure there are enough of wenches in Perth, that say to their gallants, 'Go out—do your devoir bravely, and win your lady's grace;' and yet they send not for their lovers, but for me, who cannot do the duties of a man to protect a minstrel woman, or of a burgess who fights for the honour of his town, but this peevish Catharine uses me as if I were a brawler and borderller!"

Such were the thoughts which occupied his mind, when, as he opened his door to issue forth, the person dearest to his thoughts, but whom he certainly least expected to see, was present to his eyes, and dropped into his arms.

His mixture of surprise, joy, and anxiety, did not deprive him of the presence of mind which the occasion demanded. To place Catharine Glover in safety, and recall her to herself, was to be thought of before rendering obedience to the summons of the Magistrates, however pressingly that had been delivered. He carried his lovely burden, as light as a feather, yet more precious than the same quantity of purest gold, into a small bedchamber which had been his mother's. It was the most fit for an invalid, as it looked into the garden, and was separated from the noise of the tumult.

"Here, Nurse—Nurse Shoolbred—come quick—come for death and life—here is one wants thy help!"

Up trotted the old dame. "If it should but prove any one that will keep thee out of

the scuffle—" for she also had been aroused by the noise,—but what was her astonishment, when, placed in love and reverence on the bed of her late mistress, and supported by the athletic arms of her foster son, she saw the apparently lifeless form of the Fair Maid of Perth. "Catharine Glover!" she said; "and, Holy Mother—a dying woman, as it would seem!"

"Not so, old woman," said her foster son; "the dear heart throbs—the sweet breath comes and returns! Come thou, that may aid her more meetly than I—bring water—essences—whatever thy old skill can devise. Heaven did not place her in my arms to die, but to live for herself and me."

With an activity which her age little promised, Nurse Shoolbred collected the means of restoring animation; for, like many women of the period, she understood what was to be done in such cases, nay, possessed a knowledge of treating wounds of an ordinary description, which the warlike propensities of her foster son kept in pretty constant exercise.

"Come now," she said, "son Henry, un-

fold your arms from about my patient—though she is worth the pressing—and set thy arms at freedom to help me with what I want.—Nay, I will not insist on your quitting her hand, if you will beat the palm gently, as the fingers unclose their clenched grasp."

"*I* beat her slight beautiful hand!" said Henry; "you were as well bid me beat a glass cup with a fore-hammer, as tap her fair palm with my horn-hard fingers.—But the fingers do unfold, and we will find a better way than beating;" and he applied his lips to the pretty hand, whose motion indicated returning sensation. One or two deep sighs succeeded, and the Fair Maid of Perth opened her eyes, fixed them on her lover, as he kneeled by the bedside, and again sunk back on the pillow. As she withdrew not her hand from her lover's hold or from his grasp, we must in charity believe that the return to consciousness was not so complete as to make her aware that he abused the advantage, by pressing it alternately to his lips and his bosom. At the same time we are compelled to own, that the blood

was colouring in her cheek, and that her breathing was deep and regular, for a minute or two during this relapse.

The noise at the door began now to grow much louder, and Henry was called for by all his various names, of Smith, Gow, and Hal of the Wynd, as heathens used to summon their deities by different epithets. At last, like Portuguese Catholics when exhausted with entreating their saints, the crowd without had recourse to vituperative exclamations.

"Out upon you, Henry! You are a disgraced man, mansworn to your burgher-oath, and a traitor to the Fair City, unless you come instantly forth!"

It would seem that Nurse Shoolbred's applications were now so far successful, that Catharine's senses were in some measure restored; for, turning her face more towards that of her lover, than her former posture permitted, she let her right hand fall on his shoulder, leaving her left still in his possession, and seeming slightly to detain him, while she whispered,

"Do not go, Henry—stay with me—they will kill thee, these men of blood."

It would seem that this gentle invocation, the result of finding the lover alive whom she expected to have only recognised as a corpse, though it was spoken so low as scarcely to be intelligible, had more effect to keep Henry Wynd in his present posture, than the repeated summons of many voices from without had to bring him down stairs.

"Mass, townsmen," cried one hardy citizen to his companions, "the saucy Smith but jests with us! Let us into the house, and bring him out by the lug and the horn."

"Take care what you are doing," said a more cautious assailant. "The man that presses on Henry Gow's retirement may go into his house with sound bones, but will return with ready-made work for the surgeon.—But here comes one has good right to do our errand to him, and make the recreant hear reason on both sides of his head."

The person of whom this was spoken was no

other than Simon Glover himself. He had arrived at the fatal spot where the unlucky Bonnet-maker's body was lying, just in time to discover, to his great relief, that when it was turned with the face upwards by Bailie Craigdallie's orders, the features of the poor braggart Proudfute were recognised, when the crowd expected to behold those of their favourite champion Henry Smith. A laugh, or something approaching to one, went among those who remembered how hard Oliver had struggled to obtain the character of a fighting man, however foreign to his nature and disposition, and remarked now, that he had met with a mode of death much better suited to his pretensions than to his temper. But this tendency to ill-timed mirth, which savoured of the rudeness of the times, was at once hushed by the voice, and cries, and exclamations of a woman, who struggled through the crowd, screaming at the same time,—"Oh, my husband!—my husband!"

Room was made for the sorrower, who was followed by two or three female friends. Maudie

Proudfute had been hitherto only noticed as a good-looking, black-haired woman, believed to be *dink** and disdainful to those whom she thought meaner or poorer than herself, and lady and empress over her late husband, whom she quickly caused to lower his crest when she chanced to hear him crowing out of season. But now, under the influence of powerful passion, she assumed a far more imposing character.

"Do you laugh," she said, "you unworthy burghers of Perth, because one of your own citizens has poured his blood into the kennel?—or do you laugh because the deadly lot has lighted on my husband? How has he deserved this?—Did he not maintain an honest house by his own industry, and keep a creditable board, where the sick had welcome, and the poor had relief? Did he not lend to those who wanted,—stand by his neighbours as a friend, keep counsel and do justice like a magistrate?"

"It is true, it is true," answered the assem-

* Contemptuous—scornful of others.

bly; "his blood is our blood, as much as if it were Henry Gow's."

"You speak truth, neighbours," said Bailie Craigdallie; "and this feud cannot be patched up as the former was—citizens' blood must not flow unavenged down our kennels, as if it were ditch-water, or we shall soon see the broad Tay crimsoned with it. But this blow was never meant for the poor man on whom it has unhappily fallen. Every one knew what Oliver Proudfute was, how wide he would speak, and how little he would do. He has Henry Smith's buff-coat, target, and head-piece. All the town know them as well as I do; there is no doubt on't. He had the trick, as you know, of trying to imitate the Smith in most things. Some one, blind with rage, or perhaps through liquor, has stricken the innocent Bonnet-maker, whom no man either hated or feared, or indeed cared either much or little about, instead of the stout Smith, who has twenty feuds upon his hands."

"What then is to be done, Bailie?" cried the multitude.

"That, my friends, your magistrates will de-

termine for you, as we shall instantly meet together when Sir Patrick Charteris cometh here, which must be anon. Meanwhile, let the chirurgeon Dwining examine that poor piece of clay, that he may tell us how he came by his fatal death; and then let the corpse be decently swathed in a clean shroud, as becomes an honest citizen, and placed before the high altar in the church of St John, the patron of the Fair City. Cease all clamour and noise, and every defensible man of you, as you would wish well to the Fair Town, keep his weapons in readiness, and be prepared to assemble on the High Street, at the tolling of the common bell from the Town-House, and we will either revenge the death of our fellow-citizen, or else we shall take such fortune as Heaven will send us. Meanwhile avoid all quarrelling with the knights and their followers, till we know the innocent from the guilty.—But wherefore tarries this knave Smith? He is ready enough in tumults when his presence is not wanted, and lags he now when his presence may serve the Fair City?—What ails

him, doth any one know? Hath he been upon the frolic last Fastern's Even?"

"Rather he is sick or sullen, Master Bailie," said one of the city's mairs, or sergeants; "for though he is within door, as his knaves report, yet he will neither answer to us nor admit us."

"So please your worship, Master Bailie," said Simon Glover, "I will go myself to fetch Henry Smith. I have some little difference to make up with him. And blessed be Our Lady, who hath so ordered it, that I find him alive, as a quarter of an hour since I could never have expected!"

"Bring the stout Smith to the Council-house," said the Bailie, as a mounted yeoman pressed through the crowd, and whispered in his ear,—"Here is a good fellow, who says the knight of Kinfauns is entering the port."

Such was the occasion of Simon Glover presenting himself at the house of Henry Gow at the period already noticed.

Unrestrained by the considerations of doubt

and hesitation which influenced others, he repaired to the parlour; and having overheard the bustling of Dame Shoolbred, he took the privilege of intimacy to ascend to the bed-room, and, with the slight apology of—"I crave your pardon, good neighbour," he opened the door, and entered the apartment, where a singular and unexpected sight awaited him. At the sound of his voice, May Catharine experienced a revival much speedier than Dame Shoolbred's restoratives had been able to produce; and the paleness of her complexion changed into a deep glow of the most lovely red. She pushed her lover from her with both her hands, which, until this minute, her want of consciousness, or her affection, awakened by the events of the morning, had well nigh abandoned to his caresses. Henry Smith, bashful as we know him, stumbled as he rose up; and none of the party were without a share of confusion, excepting Dame Shoolbred, who was glad to make some pretext to turn her back to the others, in order that she might enjoy a laugh at their expense,

which she felt herself utterly unable to restrain, and in which the Glover, whose surprise, though great, was of short duration, and of a joyful character, sincerely joined.

"Now, by good St John," he said, "I thought I had seen a sight this morning that would cure me of laughter, at least till Lent was over; but this would make me curl my cheek, if I were dying. Why, here stands honest Henry Smith, who was lamented as dead, and toll'd out for from every steeple in town, alive, merry, and, as it seems from his ruddy complexion, as like to live as any man in Perth. And here is my precious daughter, that yesterday would speak of nothing but the wickedness of the wights that haunt profane sports, and protect glee-maidens —Ay, she who set St Valentine and St Cupid both at defiance,—here she is, turned a glee-maiden herself, for what I can see! Truly, I am glad to see that you, my good Dame Shoolbred, who give way to no disorder, have been of this loving party."

"You do me wrong, my dearest father," said Catharine, as if about to weep. "I came here

with far different expectations than you suppose. I only came because—because—"

"Because you expected to find a dead lover," said her father, "and you have found a living one, who can receive the tokens of your regard, and return them. Now, were it not a sin, I could find in my heart to thank Heaven, that thou hast been surprised at last into owning thyself a woman—Simon Glover is not worthy to have an absolute saint for his daughter. —Nay, look not so piteously, nor expect condolence from me! Only I will try not to look merry, if you will be pleased to stop your tears, or confess them to be tears of joy."

"If I were to die for such a confession," said poor Catharine, "I could not tell what to call them. Only believe, dear father, and let Henry believe, that I would never have come hither, unless—unless—"

"Unless you had thought that Henry could not come to you," said her father. "And now, shake hands in peace and concord, and agree as Valentines should. Yesterday was Shrovetide, Henry—We will hold that thou hast confessed

thy follies, hast obtained absolution, and art relieved of all the guilt thou stoodest charged with."

"Nay, touching that, father Simon," said the Smith, "now that you are cool enough to hear me, I can swear on the Gospels, and I can call my nurse, Dame Shoolbred, to witness—"

"Nay, nay," said the Glover, "but wherefore rake up differences, which should all be forgotten?"

"Hark ye, Simon!—Simon Glover!" This was now echoed from beneath.

"True, son Smith," said the Glover seriously, "we have other work in hand. You and I must to the council instantly. Catharine shall remain here with Dame Shoolbred, who will take charge of her till we return; and then, as the town is in misrule, we two, Harry, will carry her home, and they will be bold men that cross us."

"Nay, my dear father," said Catharine, with a smile, "now you are taking Oliver Proudfute's office. That doughty burgher is Henry's brother-at-arms."

Her father's countenance grew dark.

"You have spoke a stinging word, daughter; but you know not what has happened. Kiss him, Catharine, in token of forgiveness."

"Not so," said Catharine; "I have done him too much grace already. When he has seen the errant damsel safe home, it will be time enough to claim his reward."

"Meantime," said Henry, "I will claim, as your host, what you will not allow me on other terms."

He folded the fair maiden in his arms, and was permitted to take the salute which she had refused to bestow.

As they descended the stair together, the old man laid his hand on the Smith's shoulder, and said, "Henry, my dearest wishes are fulfilled; but it is the pleasure of the saints that it should be in an hour of difficulty and terror."

"True," said the Smith; "but thou knowest, father, if our riots be frequent at Perth, at least they seldom last long."

Then, opening a door which led from the house into the smithy, "Here, comrades," he

cried, " Anton, Cuthbert, Dingwell, and Ringan ! Let none of you stir from the place till I return. Be as true as the weapons I have taught you to forge; a French crown and a Scottish merry-making for you, if you obey my command. I leave a mighty treasure in your charge. Watch the doors well—let little Jannekin scout up and down the wynd, and have your arms ready if any one approaches the house. Open the doors to no man, till Father Glover or I return ; it concerns my life and happiness."

The strong swarthy giants to whom he spoke, answered, " Death to him who attempts it !"

" My Catharine is now as safe," said he to her father, " as if twenty men garrisoned a royal castle in her cause. We shall pass most quietly to the Council-house by walking through the garden."

He led the way through a little orchard accordingly, where the birds, which had been sheltered and fed during the winter by the good-natured artizan, early in the season as it was, were saluting the precarious smiles of a Feb-

ruary sun, with a few faint and interrupted attempts at melody.

"Hear these minstrels, father," said the Smith; "I laughed at them this morning in the bitterness of my heart, because the little wretches sung, with so much of winter before them. But now, methinks, I could bear a blithe chorus, for I have my Valentine as they have theirs; and whatever ill may lie before me for to-morrow, I am to-day the happiest man in Perth, city or county, burgh or landward."

"Yet I must allay your joy," said the old Glover, "though, Heaven knows, I share it.—Poor Oliver Proudfute, the inoffensive fool that you and I knew so well, has been found this morning dead in the streets."

"Only dead drunk, I trust?" said the Smith; "nay, a caudle and a dose of matrimonial advice will bring him to life again."

"No, Henry, no. He is slain—slain with a battle-axe, or some such weapon."

"Impossible!" replied the Smith; "he was light-footed enough, and would not for all

Perth have trusted to his hands, when he could extricate himself by his heels."

"No choice was allowed him. The blow was dealt in the very back of his head; he who struck must have been a shorter man than himself, and used a horseman's battle-axe, or some such weapon, for a Lochaber-axe must have struck the upper part of his head—But there he lies dead, brained, I may say, by a most frightful wound."

"This is inconceivable," said Henry Wynd. "He was in my house at midnight, in a morricer's habit; seemed to have been drinking, though not to excess. He told me a tale of having been beset by revellers, and being in danger; but, alas! you know the man; I deemed it was a swaggering fit, as he sometimes took when he was in liquor; and, may the Merciful Virgin forgive me! I let him go without company, in which I did him inhuman wrong. Holy St John be my witness! I would have gone with any helpless creature; and far more with him, with whom I have so often sat at the same board, and drunken of the same cup. Who, of the race

of man, could have thought of harming a creature so simple, and so unoffending, excepting by his idle vaunts!"

"Henry, he wore thy headpiece, thy buff-coat, thy target—How came he by these?"

"Why, he demanded the use of them for the night, and I was ill at ease, and well pleased to be rid of his company; having kept no holiday, and being determined to keep none, in respect of our misunderstanding."

"It is the opinion of Bailie Craigdallie, and all our sagest councillors, that the blow was intended for yourself, and that it becomes you to prosecute the due vengeance of our fellow-citizen, who received the death which was meant for you."

The Smith was for some time silent. They had now left the garden, and were walking in a lonely lane, by which they meant to approach the Council-house of the burgh, without being exposed to observation or idle inquiry.

"You are silent, my son, yet we two have much to speak of," said Simon Glover. "Bethink thee that this widowed woman Maudlin,

if she should see cause to bring a charge against any one for the wrong done to her and her orphan children, must support it by a champion, according to law and custom; for be the murderer who he may, we know enough of these followers of the nobles to be assured, that the party suspected will appeal to the combat, in derision, perhaps, of those whom they will call the cowardly burghers. While we are men with blood in our veins, this must not be, Henry Wynd."

"I see where you would draw me, father," answered Henry, dejectedly; "and St John knows I have heard a summons to battle as willingly as war-horse ever heard the trumpet. But bethink you, father, how I have lost Catharine's favour repeatedly, and have been driven well nigh to despair of ever regaining it, for being, if I may say so, even too ready a man of my hands. And here are all our quarrels made up, and the hopes, that seemed this morning removed beyond earthly prospect, have become nearer and brighter than ever; and must I, with the dear one's kiss of forgiveness

on my lips, engage in a new scene of violence, which you are well aware will give her the deepest offence?"

"It is hard for me to advise you, Henry," said Simon; "but this I must ask you—Have you, or have you not, reason to think, that this poor unfortunate Oliver has been mistaken for you?"

"I fear it too much," said Henry. "He was thought something like me, and the poor fool had studied to ape my gestures and manner of walking, nay, the very airs which I have the trick of whistling, that he might increase a resemblance which has cost him dear. I have ill-willers enough, both in burgh and landward, to owe me a shrewd turn; and he, I think, could have none such."

"Well, Henry, I cannot say but my daughter will be offended. She has been much with Father Clement, and has received notions about peace and forgiveness, which methinks suit ill with a country where the laws cannot protect us, unless we have spirit to protect ourselves. If you determine for the combat, I will do my

best to persuade her to look on the matter as the other good womanhood in the burgh will do; and if you resolve to let the matter rest—the man who has lost his life for yours remaining unavenged—the widow and the orphans without any reparation for the loss of a husband and father—I will then do you the justice to remember, that I, at least, ought not to think the worse of you for your patience, since it was adopted for love of my child. But, Henry, we must in that case remove ourselves from bonny St Johnstoun, for here we will be but a disgraced family."

Henry groaned deeply, and was silent for an instant, then replied, "I would rather be dead than dishonoured, though I should never see her again! Had it been yester evening, I would have met the best blade among these men-at-arms as blithely as ever I danced at a May-pole. But to-day, when she had first as good as said, 'Henry Smith, I love thee!'—Father Glover, it is very hard. Yet it is all my own fault! I ought to have allowed him the shelter of my roof, when he prayed me in his agony of fear;

or, had I gone with him, I should then have prevented or shared his fate. But I taunted him, ridiculed him, loaded him with maledictions, though the saints know they were uttered in idle peevishness of impatience. I drove him out from my doors, whom I knew so helpless, to take the fate which was perhaps intended for me. I must avenge him, or be dishonoured for ever. See, father—I have been called a man hard as the steel I work in—Does burnished steel ever drop tears like these?—Shame on me that I should shed them!"

"It is no shame, my dearest son," said Simon; "thou art as kind as brave, and I have always known it. There is yet a chance for us. No one may be discovered to whom suspicion attaches, and where none such is found, the combat cannot take place. It is a hard thing to wish that the innocent blood may not be avenged. But if the perpetrator of this foul murder be hidden for the present, thou wilt be saved from the task of seeking that vengeance which Heaven, doubtless, will take at its own proper time."

As they spoke thus, they arrived at the point of the High Street where the Council-house was situated. As they reached the door, and made their way through the multitude who still thronged the street, they found the avenues guarded by a select party of armed burghers, and about fifty spears belonging to the Knight of Kinfauns, who, with his allies the Grays, Blairs, Moncrieffs, and others, had brought to Perth a considerable body of horse, of which these were a part. So soon as the Glover and Smith presented themselves, they were admitted to the chamber in which the magistrates were assembled.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Council-room of Perth presented a singular spectacle. In a gloomy apartment, ill and inconveniently lighted by two windows of different form and of unequal size, were assembled, around a large oaken table, a group of men, of whom those who occupied the higher seats were merchants, that is, guild brethren, or shopkeepers, arrayed in decent dresses becoming their station, but most of them bearing, like the Regent York, " signs of war around their aged necks;" gorgets, namely, and baldricks, which sustained their weapons. The lower places around the table were occupied by mechanics and artisans, the presidents, or

deacons, as they were termed, of the working classes, in their ordinary clothes, somewhat better arranged than usual. These too wore pieces of armour of various descriptions. Some had the black jack, or doublet, covered with small plates of iron of a lozenge shape, which, secured through the upper angle, hung in rows above each, and which, swaying with the motion of the wearer's person, formed a secure defence to the body. Others had buff-coats, which, as already mentioned, could resist the blow of a sword, and even a lance's point, unless propelled with great force. At the bottom of the table, surrounded as it was with this varied assembly, sat Sir Louis Lundin; no military man, but a priest and parson of St John's, arrayed in his canonical dress, and having his pen and ink before him. He was town-clerk of the burgh, and, like all the priests of the period, (who were called from that circumstance the Pope's knights,) received the honourable title of *Dominus*, contracted into Dom, or Dan, or translated into Sir, the title of reverence due to the secular chivalry.

On an elevated seat, at the head of the council board, was placed Sir Patrick Charteris, in complete armour, brightly burnished; a singular contrast to the motley mixture of warlike and peaceful attire exhibited by the burghers, who were only called to arms occasionally. The bearing of the Provost, while it completely admitted the intimate connexion which mutual interests had created betwixt himself, the burgh, and the magistracy, was at the same time calculated to assert the superiority, which, in virtue of gentle blood and chivalrous rank, the opinions of the age assigned to him over the members of the assembly in which he presided. Two squires stood behind him, one of them holding the knight's pennon, and another his shield, bearing his armorial distinctions, being a hand holding a dagger, or short sword, with the proud motto, *This is my charter.* A handsome page displayed the long sword of his master, and another bore his lance; all which chivalrous emblems and appurtenances were the more scrupulously exhibited, that the dignitary

to whom they belonged was engaged in discharging the office of a burgh magistrate. In his own person the Knight of Kinfauns appeared to affect something of state and stiffness, which did not naturally pertain to his frank and jovial character.

"So, you are come at length, Henry Smith and Simon Glover," said the Provost. "Know that you have kept us waiting for your attendance. Should it so chance again while we occupy this place, we will lay such a fine on you as you will have small pleasure in paying. Enough—make no excuses. They are not asked now, and another time they will not be admitted. Know, sirs, that our reverend clerk hath taken down in writing, and at full length, what I will tell you in brief, that you may see what is to be required of you, Henry Smith, in particular. Our late fellow-citizen, Oliver Proudfute, hath been found dead in the High Street, close by the entrance into the wynd. It seemeth he was slain by a heavy blow with a short axe, dealt from behind and at unawares; and the act by which he fell can only be termed a deed of

foul and fore-thought murder. So much for the crime. The criminal can only be indicated by circumstances. It is recorded in the protocol of the Reverend Sir Louis Lundin, that divers well-reputed witnesses saw our deceased citizen, Oliver Proudfute, till a late period, accompanying the Entry of the morrice-dancers, of whom he was one, as far as the house of Simon Glover, in Curfew Street, where they again played their pageant. It is also manifested, that at this place he separated from the rest of the band, after some discourse with Simon Glover, and made an appointment to meet with the others of his company at the sign of the Griffin, there to conclude the holiday.—Now, Simon, I demand of you whether this be truly stated, so far as you know? and further, what was the purport of the defunct Oliver Proudfute's discourse with you?"

"My Lord Provost and very worshipful Sir Patrick," answered Simon Glover, "you and this honourable council shall know, that, touching certain reports which had been made of the conduct of Henry Smith, some quarrel had

arisen between myself and another of my family, and the said Smith here present. Now, this our poor fellow-citizen, Oliver Proudfute, having been active in spreading these reports, as indeed his element lay in such gossipred, some words passed betwixt him and me on the subject; and, as I think, he left me with the purpose of visiting Henry Smith, for he broke off from the morrice-dancers, promising, as it seems, to meet them, as your honour has said, at the sign of the Griffin, in order to conclude the evening. But what he actually did, I know not, as I never again saw him in life."

"It is enough," said Sir Patrick, "and agrees with all that we have heard.—Now, worthy sirs, we next find our poor fellow-citizen environed by a set of revellers and maskers, who had assembled in the High Street, by whom he was shamefully ill treated, being compelled to kneel down in the street, and there to quaff huge quantities of liquor against his inclination, until at length he escaped from them by flight. This violence was accomplished with drawn swords, loud shouts, and imprecations, so as to attract the

attention of several persons, who, alarmed by the tumult, looked out from their windows, as well as of one or two passengers, who, keeping aloof from the light of the torches, lest they also had been maltreated, beheld the usage which our fellow-citizen received in the High Street of the burgh. And although these revellers were disguised, and used vizards, yet their disguises were well known, being a set of quaint masking habits, prepared some weeks ago by command of Sir John Ramorny, Master of the Horse to his Royal Highness the Duke of Rothsay, Prince Royal of Scotland."

A low groan went through the assembly.

"Yes; so it is, brave burghers," continued Sir Patrick; "our inquiries have led us into conclusions both melancholy and terrible. But as no one can regret the point at which they seem likely to arrive more than I do, so no man living can dread its consequences less. It is even so —various artizans employed upon the articles, have described the dresses prepared for Sir John Ramorny's mask as being exactly similar to

those of the men by whom Oliver Proudfute was observed to be maltreated. And one mechanic, being Wingfield the feather-dresser, who saw the revellers when they had our fellow-citizen within their hands, remarked that they wore the cinctures and coronals of painted feathers, which he himself had made by the order of the Prince's Master of the Horse.

"After the moment of his escape from these revellers, we lose all trace of Oliver; but we can prove that the maskers went to Sir John Ramorny's, where they were admitted, after some show of delay.—It is rumoured, that thou, Henry Smith, sawest our unhappy fellow-citizen after he had been in the hands of these revellers—What is the truth of that matter?"

"He came to my house in the wynd," said Henry, "about half an hour before midnight; and I admitted him, something unwillingly, as he had been keeping carnival while I remained at home; and there is ill talk, says the proverb, betwixt a full man and a fasting."

"And in which plight seemed he when thou didst admit him?" said the Provost.

"He seemed," answered the Smith, "out of breath, and talked repeatedly of having been endangered by revellers. I paid but small regard, for he was ever a timorous, chicken-spirited, though well-meaning man, and I held that he was speaking more from fancy than reality. But I shall always account it for foul offence in myself, that I did not give him my company, which he requested; and if I live, I will found masses for his soul, in expiation of my guilt."

"Did he describe those from whom he received the injury?" said the Provost.

"Revellers in masking habits," replied Henry.

"And did he intimate his fear of having to do with them on his return?" again demanded Sir Patrick.

"He alluded particularly to his being waylaid, which I treated as visionary, having been able to see no one in the lane."

"Had he then no help from thee, of any kind whatsoever?" said the Provost.

"Yes, worshipful," replied the Smith; "he exchanged his morrice dress for my head-piece, buff-coat, and target, which I hear were found

upon his body; and I have at home his morrice-cap and bells, with the jerkin and other things pertaining. He was to return my garb of fence, and get back his own masking suit this day, had the saints so permitted."

"You saw him not then afterwards?"

"Never, my lord."

"One word more," said the Provost. "Have you any reason to think that the blow which slew Oliver Proudfute was meant for another man?"

"I have," answered the Smith; "but it is doubtful, and may be dangerous to add such a conjecture, which is besides only a supposition."

"Speak it out, on your burgher faith and oath —For whom, think you, was the blow meant?"

"If I must speak," replied Henry, "I believe Oliver Proudfute received the fate which was designed for myself; the rather that, in his folly, Oliver spoke of trying to assume my manner of walking, as well as my dress."

"Have you feud with any one, that you form such an idea?" said Sir Patrick Charteris.

"To my shame and sin be it spoken, I have

feud with Highland and Lowland, English and Scot, Perth and Angus. I do not believe poor Oliver had feud with a new-hatched chicken.—Alas! he was the more fully prepared for a sudden call!"

"Hark ye, Smith," said the Provost,—"Answer me distinctly—Is there cause of feud between the household of Sir John Ramorny and yourself?"

"To a certainty, my lord, there is. It is now generally said, that Black Quentin, who went over Tay to Fife some days since, was the owner of the hand which was found in Couvrefew Street upon the eve of St Valentine. It was I who struck off that hand with a blow of my broadsword. As this Black Quentin was a chamberlain of Sir John, and much trusted, it is like there must be feud between me and his master's dependents."

"It bears a likely front, Smith," said Sir Patrick Charteris.—"And now, good brothers and wise magistrates, there are two suppositions, each of which leads to the same conclusion. The maskers who seized our fellow-citizen, and mis-

used him in a manner of which his body retains some slight marks, may have met with their former prisoner as he returned homewards, and finished their ill usage by taking his life. He himself expressed to Henry Gow fears that this would be the case. If this be really true, one or more of Sir John Ramorny's attendants must have been the assassins. But I think it more likely that one or two of the revellers may have remained on the field, or returned to it, having changed perhaps their disguise, and that to those men (for Oliver Proudfute, in his own personal appearance, would only have been a subject of sport) his apparition in the dress, and assuming, as he proposed to do, the manner, of Henry Smith, was matter of deep hatred; and that seeing him alone, they had taken, as they thought, a certain and safe mode to rid themselves of an enemy so dangerous as all men know Henry Wynd is accounted by those that are his unfriends. The same train of reasoning, again, rests the guilt with the household of Sir John Ramorny. How think you, sirs? Are we not free to charge the crime upon them?"

The Magistrates whispered together for several minutes, and then replied by the voice of Bailie Craigdallie,—" Noble Knight, and our worthy Provost,—we agree entirely in what your wisdom has spoken concerning this dark and bloody matter; nor do we doubt your sagacity in tracing to the fellowship and the company of John Ramorny of that Ilk, the villainy which hath been done to our deceased fellow-citizen, whether in his own character and capacity, or as mistaking him for our brave townsman, Henry of the Wynd. But Sir John, in his own behalf, and as the Prince's Master of the Horse, maintains an extensive household; and as of course the charge will be rebutted by a denial, we would ask, how we shall proceed in that case?—It is true, could we find law for firing the lodging, and putting all within it to the sword, the old proverb of 'short rede, good rede,' might here apply; for a fouler household of defiers of God, destroyers of men, and debauchers of women, are nowhere sheltered than are in Ramorny's band. But I doubt that this summary mode of execution would scarce be

borne out by the laws; and no tittle of evidence which I have heard will tend to fix the crime on any single individual or individuals."

Before the Provost could reply, the Town-Clerk arose, and stroking his venerable beard, craved permission to speak, which was instantly granted. "Brethren," he said, "as well in our fathers' time as ours, hath God, on being rightly appealed to, condescended to make manifest the crimes of the guilty, and the innocence of those who may have been rashly accused. Let us demand from our Sovereign Lord, King Robert, who, when the wicked do not interfere to pervert his good intentions, is as just and clement a Prince as our annals can show in their long line, in the name of the Fair City, and of all the commons in Scotland, that he give us, after the fashion of our ancestors, the means of appealing to Heaven for light upon this dark murder. We will demand the proof by *bier-right*, often granted in the days of our Sovereign's ancestors, approved of by bulls and decretals, and administered by the great Empe-

ror Charlemagne in France, by King Arthur in Britain, and by Gregory the Great, and the mighty Achaius, in this our land of Scotland."

"I have heard of the bier-right, Sir Louis," quoth the Provost, "and I know we have it in our charters of the Fair City; but I am something ill-learned in the ancient laws, and would pray you to inform us more distinctly of its nature."

"We will demand of the King," said Sir Louis Lundin, "my advice being taken, that the body of our murdered fellow-citizen be transported into the High Church of St John's, and suitable masses said for the benefit of his soul, and for the discovery of his foul murder. Meantime we shall obtain an order that Sir John Ramorny give up a list of such of his household as were in Perth in the course of the night between Fastern's Even and this Ash-Wednesday, and become bound to present them on a certain day and hour, to be early named, in the High Church of St John's; there one by one to pass before the bier of our murdered fellow-citizen, and in the form prescribed to call upon God and

his saints to bear witness that he is innocent of the acting, art or part, of the murder. And credit me, as has been indeed proved by numerous instances, that if the murderer shall endeavour to shroud himself by making such an appeal, the antipathy which subsists between the dead body, and the hand which dealt the fatal blow that divorced it from the soul, will awaken some imperfect life, under the influence of which the veins of the dead man will pour forth at the fatal wounds the blood which has been so long stagnant in the veins. Or, to speak more certainly, it is the pleasure of Heaven, by some hidden agency which we cannot comprehend, to leave open this mode of discovering the wickedness of him who has defaced the image of his Creator."

"I have heard this law talked of," said Sir Patrick, "and it was enforced in the Bruce's time. This surely is no unfit period to seek, by such a mystic mode of inquiry, the truth, to which no ordinary means can give us access, seeing that a general accusation of Sir John's household would full surely be met by a gene-

ral denial. Yet, I must crave farther of Sir Louis, our reverend town-clerk, how we shall prevent the guilty person from escaping in the interim?"

"The burghers will maintain a strict watch upon the wall, draw-bridges shall be raised, and portcullises lowered, from sunset to sunrise, and strong patrols maintained through the night. This guard the burghers will willingly maintain, to secure against the escape of the murderer of their townsman."

The rest of the councillors acquiesced, by word, sign, and look, in this proposal.

"Again," said the Provost, "what if any one of the suspected household refuse to submit to the ordeal of bier-right?"

"He may appeal to that of combat," said the reverend city scribe, "with an opponent of equal rank; because the accused person must have his choice, in the appeal to the judgment of God, by what ordeal he will be tried. But if he refuses both, he must be held as guilty, and so punished."

The sages of the council unanimously agreed with the opinion of their Provost and Town-Clerk, and resolved, in all formality, to petition the King, as a matter of right, that the murder of their fellow-citizen should be inquired into according to this ancient form, which was held to manifest the truth, and received as matter of evidence in case of murder, so late as towards the end of the seventeenth century. But before the meeting dissolved, Bailie Craigdallie thought it meet to inquire, who was to be the champion of Maudie, or Magdalen Proudfute, and her two children.

"There need be little inquiry about that," said Sir Patrick Charteris; "we are men, and wear swords, which should be broken over the head of any one amongst us, who will not draw it in behalf of the widow and orphans of our murdered fellow-citizen, and in brave revenge of his death. If Sir John Ramorny shall personally resent the inquiry, Patrick Charteris of Kinfauns will do battle with him to the outrance, whilst horse and man may stand, or spear

and blade hold together. But in case the challenger be of yeomanly degree, well wot I that Magdalen Proudfute may choose her own champion among the bravest burghers of Perth, and shame and dishonour were it to the Fair City for ever, could she light upon one who was traitor and coward enough to say her nay! Bring her hither, that she may make her election."

Henry Smith heard this with a melancholy anticipation that the poor woman's choice would light upon him, and that his recent reconciliation with his mistress would be again dissolved, by his being engaged in a fresh quarrel, from which there lay no honourable means of escape, and which, in any other circumstances, he would have welcomed as a glorious opportunity of distinguishing himself, both in sight of the court and of the city. He was aware that under the tuition of Father Clement, Catharine viewed the ordeal of battle rather as an insult to religion, than an appeal to the Deity, and did not consider it as reasonable, that superior strength of arm, or skill of weapon, should be resorted to as the proof of moral

guilt or innocence. He had, therefore, much to fear from her peculiar opinions in this particular, refined as they were beyond those of the age she lived in.

While he thus suffered under these contending feelings, Magdalen, the widow of the slaughtered man, entered the court, wrapt in a deep mourning veil, and followed and supported by five or six women of good, (that is, of respectability,) dressed in the same melancholy attire. One of her attendants held an infant in her arms, the last pledge of poor Oliver's nuptial affections. Another led a little tottering creature of two years, or thereabouts, which looked with wonder and fear, sometimes on the black dress in which they had muffled him, and sometimes on the scene around him.

The assembly rose to receive the melancholy group, and saluted them with an expression of the deepest sympathy, which Magdalen, though the mate of poor Oliver, returned with an air of dignity, which she borrowed, perhaps, from the extremity of her distress. Sir Patrick Charteris then stepped forward, and with the cour-

tesy of a knight to a female, and of a protector to an oppressed and injured widow, took the poor woman's hand, and explained to her briefly, by what course the city had resolved to follow out the vengeance due for her husband's slaughter.

Having, with a softness and gentleness which did not belong to his general manner, ascertained that the unfortunate woman perfectly understood what was meant, he said aloud to the assembly, "Good citizens of Perth, and free-born men of guild and craft, attend to what is about to pass, for it concerns your rights and privileges. Here stands Magdalen Proudfute, desirous to follow forth the revenge due for the death of her husband, foully murdered, as she sayeth, by Sir John Ramorny, Knight, of that Ilk, and which she offers to prove, by the evidence of bier-right, or by the body of a man. Therefore, I, Patrick Charteris, being a belted knight and free-born gentleman, offer myself to do battle in her just quarrel, whilst man and horse may endure, if any one of my degree shall lift my glove.—How say you, Magdalen Proudfute, will you accept me for your champion?"

The widow answered with difficulty,—" I can desire none nobler."

Sir Patrick then took her right hand in his, and, kissing her forehead, for such was the ceremony, said solemnly,—" So may God and St John prosper me at my need, as I will do my devoir as your champion, knightly, truly, and manfully. Go now, Magdalen, and choose at your will among the burgesses of the Fair City, present or absent, any one upon whom you desire to rest your challenge, if he against whom you bring plaint shall prove to be beneath my degree."

All eyes were turned to Henry Smith, whom the general voice had already pointed out as in every respect the fittest to act as champion on the occasion. But the widow waited not for the general prompting of their looks. As soon as Sir Patrick had spoken, she crossed the floor to the place where, near the bottom of the table, the armourer stood among the men of his degree, and took him by the hand:—

" Henry Gow, or Smith," she said, " good burgher and craftsman, my—my—"

Husband, she would have said, but the word would not come forth; she was obliged to change the expression.

"He who is gone, loved and prized you over all men; therefore meet it is that thou shouldst follow out the quarrel of his widow and orphans."

If there had been a possibility, which in that age there was not, of Henry's rejecting or escaping from a trust for which all men seemed to destine him, every wish and idea of retreat was cut off, when the widow began to address him; and a command from Heaven could hardly have made a stronger impression than did the appeal of the unfortunate Magdalen. Her allusion to his intimacy with the deceased moved him to the soul. During Oliver's life, doubtless, there had been a strain of absurdity in his excessive predilection for Henry, which, considering how very different they were in character, had in it something ludicrous. But all this was now forgotten, and Henry, giving way to his natural ardour, only remembered that Oliver had been his friend and intimate; a man

who had loved and honoured him as much as he was capable of entertaining such sentiments for any one; and above all, that there was much reason to suspect that the deceased had fallen victim to a blow meant for Henry himself.

It was, therefore, with an alacrity which, the minute before, he could scarce have commanded, and which seemed to express a stern pleasure, that, having pressed his lips to the cold brow of the unhappy Magdalen, the armourer replied,—

"I, Henry the Smith, dwelling in the Wynd of Perth, good man and true, and freely born, accept the office of champion to this widow Magdalen, and these orphans, and will do battle in their quarrel to the death, with any man whomsoever of my own degree, and that so long as I shall draw breath. So help me at my need God and good St John!"

There rose from the audience a half-suppressed cry, expressing the interest which the persons present took in the prosecution of the quarrel, and their confidence in the issue.

Sir Patrick Charteris then took measures for

repairing to the King's presence, and demanding leave to proceed with inquiry into the murder of Oliver Proudfute, according to the custom of bier-right, and, if necessary, by combat.

He performed this duty after the Town-Council had dissolved, in a private interview between himself and the King, who heard of this new trouble with much vexation, and appointed next morning, after mass, for Sir Patrick and the parties interested, to attend his pleasure in council. In the meantime, a royal pursuivant was dispatched to the Constable's lodgings, to call over the roll of Sir John Ramorny's attendants, and charge him, with his whole retinue, under high penalties, to abide within Perth, until the King's pleasure should be farther known.

CHAPTER IX.

In God's name, see the lists and all things fit;
There let them end it—God defend the right!
Henry IV. Part II.

In the same Council-room of the conventual palace of the Dominicans, King Robert was seated with his brother Albany, whose affected austerity of virtue, and real art and dissimulation, maintained so high an influence over the feeble-minded monarch. It was indeed natural, that one who seldom saw things according to their real forms and outlines, should view them according to the light in which they were presented to him by a bold astucious man, possessing the claim of such near relationship.

Ever anxious on account of his misguided and unfortunate son, the King was now endeavouring to make Albany coincide in opinion

with him, in exculpating Rothsay from any part in the death of the Bonnet-maker, the precognition concerning which had been left by Sir Patrick Charteris for his Majesty's consideration.

"This is an unhappy matter, brother Robin," he said, "a most unhappy occurrence; and goes nigh to put strife and quarrel betwixt the nobility and the commons here, as they have been at war together in so many distant lands. I see but one cause of comfort in the matter; and that is, that Sir John Ramorny having received his dismissal from the Duke of Rothsay's family, it cannot be said that he or any of his people, who may have done this bloody deed, (if it has truly been done by them,) have been encouraged or hounded out upon such an errand by my poor Robin. I am sure, brother, you and I can bear witness, how readily, upon my entreaties, he agreed to dismiss Ramorny from his service, on account of that brawl in Curfew Street."

"I remember his doing so," said Albany; "and well do I hope that the connexion be-

twixt the Prince and Ramorny has not been renewed since he seemed to comply with your grace's wishes."

"Seemed to comply?—The connexion renewed?" said the King; "what mean you by these expressions, brother? Surely, when Robin promised to me, that if that unhappy matter of Curfew Street were but smothered up and concealed, he would part with Ramorny, as he was a counsellor thought capable of involving him in similar fooleries, and would acquiesce in our inflicting on him either exile, or such punishment as it should please us to impose—surely you cannot doubt that he was sincere in his professions, and would keep his word? Remember you not, that when you advised that a heavy fine should be levied upon his estate in Fife in lieu of banishment, the Prince himself seemed to say, that exile would be better for Ramorny, and even for himself?"

"I remember it well, my royal brother. Nor truly could I have suspected Ramorny of having so much influence over the Prince, after having been accessary to placing him in a si-

tuation so perilous, had it not been for my royal kinsman's own confession, alluded to by your Grace, that, if suffered to remain at court, he might still continue to direct his conduct. I then regretted I had advised a fine in place of exile. But that time is passed, and now new mischief has occurred, fraught with much peril to your Majesty, as well as to your royal heir, and to the whole kingdom."

"What mean you, Robin?" said the weak-minded King. "By the tomb of our parents! by the soul of Bruce, our immortal ancestor! I entreat thee, my dearest brother, to take compassion on me. Tell me what evil threatens my son, or my kingdom?"

The features of the King, trembling with anxiety, and his eyes brimful of tears, were bent upon his brother, who seemed to assume time for consideration ere he replied.

"My lord, the danger lies here. Your Grace believes that the Prince had no accession to this second aggression upon the citizens of Perth—the slaughter of this bonnet-making fellow, about whose death they clamour, as a set of

gulls about their comrade, when one of the noisy brood is struck down by a boy's shaft."

"Their lives," said the King, "are dear to themselves and their friends, Robin."

"Truly, ay, my liege; and they make them dear to us too, ere we can settle with the knaves for the least blood-witt.—But, as I said, your Majesty thinks the Prince had no share in this last slaughter: I will not attempt to shake your belief in that delicate point, but will endeavour to believe along with you. What you think is rule for me. Robin of Albany will never think otherwise than Robin of broad Scotland."

"Thank you, thank you," said the King, taking his brother's hand. "I knew I might rely that your affection would do justice to poor heedless Rothsay, who exposes himself to so much misconstruction that he scarcely deserves the sentiments you feel for him."

Albany had such an immovable constancy of purpose, that he was able to return the fraternal pressure of the King's hand, while tearing up by the very roots the hopes of the indulgent, fond old man.

"But, alas!" the Duke continued, with a sigh, "this burly intractable Knight of Kinfauns, and his brawling herd of burghers, will not view the matter as we do. They have the boldness to say, that this dead fellow had been misused by Rothsay and his fellows, who were in the street in mask and revel, stopping men and women, compelling them to dance, or to drink huge quantities of wine, with other follies needless to recount; and they say, that the whole party repaired to Sir John Ramorny's, and broke their way into the house, in order to conclude their revel there; thus affording good reason to judge, that the dismissal of Sir John from the Prince's service was but a feigned stratagem to deceive the public. And hence, they urge, that if ill were done that night, by Sir John Ramorny or his followers, much it is to be thought that the Duke of Rothsay must have at least been privy to, if he did not authorize it."

"Albany, this is dreadful!" said the King; "would they make a murderer of my boy? would they pretend my son would soil his hands

in Scottish blood, without having either provocation or purpose? No, no—they will not invent calumnies so broad as these, for they are flagrant and incredible."

"Pardon, my liege," answered the Duke of Albany; "they say the cause of quarrel which occasioned the riot in Curfew Street, and the consequences, was more proper to the Prince than to Sir John; since none suspects, far less believes, that that hopeful enterprise was conducted for the gratification of the Knight of Ramorny."

"Thou drivest me mad, Robin!" said the King.

"I am dumb," answered his brother; "I did but speak my poor mind according to your royal order."

"Thou meanest well, I know," said the King; "but instead of tearing me to pieces with the display of inevitable calamities, were it not kinder, Robin, to point me out some mode to escape from them?"

"True, my liege; but as the only road of extrication is rough and difficult, it is necessary

your Grace should be first possessed with the absolute necessity of using it, ere you hear it even described. The chirurgeon must first convince his patient of the incurable condition of a shattered member, ere he venture to name amputation, though it be the only remedy."

Robert, at these words, was roused to a degree of alarm and indignation, greater than his brother had deemed he could be awakened to.

"Shattered and mortified member! my Lord of Albany? amputation the only remedy!—These are unintelligible words, my lord.—If thou appliest them to our son Rothsay, thou must make them good to the letter, else mayst thou have bitter cause to rue the consequence."

"You construe me too literally, my royal liege," said Albany. "I spoke not of the Prince in such unbeseeming terms; for I call Heaven to witness, that he is dearer to me as the son of a well-beloved brother, than had he been son of my own. But I spoke in regard to separating him from the follies and vanities of life, which holy men say are like to mortified mem-

bers, and ought, like them, to be cut off and thrown from us, as things which interrupt our progress in better things."

"I understand—thou wouldst have this Ramorny, who hath been thought the instrument of my son's follies, exiled from court," said the relieved Monarch, "until these unhappy scandals are forgotten, and our subjects are disposed to look upon our son with different and more confiding eyes."

"That were good counsel, my liege; but mine went a little—a very little—farther. I would have the Prince himself removed for some brief period from court."

"How, Albany! part with my child, my first-born, the light of my eyes, and—wilful as he is—the darling of my heart!—Oh, Robin! I cannot, and I will not."

"Nay, I did but suggest, my lord—I am sensible of the wound such a proceeding must inflict on a parent's heart, for am I not myself a father?" And he hung his head, as if in hopeless despondency.

"I could not survive it, Albany. When I think that even our own influence over him, which, sometimes forgotten in our absence, is ever effectual whilst he is with us, is by your plan to be entirely removed, what perils might he not rush upon? I could not sleep in his absence—I should hear his death-groan in every breeze; and you, Albany, though you conceal it better, would be nearly as anxious."

Thus spoke the facile monarch, willing to conciliate his brother and cheat himself, by taking it for granted that an affection, of which there were no traces, subsisted betwixt the uncle and nephew.

"Your paternal apprehensions are too easily alarmed, my lord," said Albany. "I do not propose to leave the disposal of the Prince's motions to his own wild pleasure. I understand that the Prince is to be placed for a short time under some becoming restraint—that he should be subjected to the charge of some grave counsellor, who must be responsible both for his conduct and his safety, as a tutor for his pupil."

"How! a tutor? and at Rothsay's age?"

exclaimed the King; "he is two years beyond the space to which our laws limit the term of nonage."

"The wiser Romans," said Albany, "extended it for four years after the period we assign; and, in common sense, the right of control ought to last till it be no longer necessary, and so the time ought to vary with the disposition. Here is young Lindsay, the Earl of Crawford, who they say gives patronage to Ramorny on this appeal—He is a lad of fifteen, with the deep passions and fixed purpose of a man of thirty; while my royal nephew, with much more amiable and noble qualities both of head and heart, sometimes shows, at twenty-three years of age, the wanton humours of a boy, towards whom restraint may be kindness.—And do not be discouraged that it is so, my liege, or angry with your brother for telling the truth; since the best fruits are those that are slowest in ripening, and the best horses such as give most trouble to the grooms who train them for the field or lists."

The Duke stopped, and after suffering King Robert to indulge for two or three minutes in a

reverie which he did not attempt to interrupt, he added, in a more lively tone,—" But, cheer up, my noble liege; perhaps the feud may be made up without farther fighting or difficulty. The widow is poor, for her husband, though he was much employed, had idle and costly habits. The matter may be therefore redeemed for money, and the amount of an assythment* may be recovered out of Ramorny's estate."

" Nay, that we will ourselves discharge," said King Robert, eagerly catching at the hope of a pacific termination of this unpleasing debate. " Ramorny's prospects will be destroyed by his being sent from court, and deprived of his charge in Rothsay's household; and it would be ungenerous to load a falling man.—But here comes our secretary, the Prior, to tell us the hour of council approaches.—Good morrow, my worthy father."

" Benedicite, my royal liege," answered the Abbot.

" Now, good father," continued the King,

* A mulct, in atonement for bloodshed, due to the nearest relations of the deceased.

" without waiting for Rothsay, whose accession to our counsels we will ourselves guarantee, proceed we to the business of our kingdom. What advices have you from the Douglas?"

" He has arrived at his Castle of Tantallon, my liege, and has sent a post to say, that though the Earl of March remains in sullen seclusion in his fortress of Dunbar, his friends and followers are gathering and forming an encampment near Coldingham, where it is supposed they intend to await the arrival of a large force of English, which Hotspur and Sir Ralph Percy are assembling on the English frontier."

" That is cold news," said the King; " and may God forgive George of Dunbar!"—The Prince entered as he spoke, and he continued—"Ha! thou art here at length, Rothsay;—I saw thee not at mass."

" I was an idler this morning," said the Prince, " having spent a restless and feverish night."

" Ah, foolish boy!" answered the King; " hadst thou not been over restless on Fas-

tern's Eve, thou hadst not been feverish on the night of Ash Wednesday."

"Let me not interrupt your prayers, my liege," said the Prince lightly. "Your Grace was invoking Heaven in behalf of some one—an enemy doubtless, for these have the frequent advantage of your orisons."

"Sit down and be at peace, foolish youth!" said his father, his eye resting at the same time on the handsome face and graceful figure of his favourite son. Rothsay drew a cushion near to his father's feet, and threw himself carelessly down upon it, while the King resumed.

"I was regretting that the Earl of March, having separated warm from my hand with full assurance that he should receive compensation for everything which he could complain of as injurious, should have been capable of caballing with Northumberland against his own country—Is it possible he could doubt our intentions to make good our word?"

"I will answer for him, No," said the Prince; "March never doubted your Highness's word. Marry, he may well have made question whether

your learned councillors would leave your Majesty the power of keeping it."

Robert the Third had adopted to a great extent the timid policy, of not seeming to hear expressions, which, being heard, required, even in his own eyes, some display of displeasure. He passed on, therefore, in his discourse, without observing his son's speech; but in private, Rothsay's rashness augmented the displeasure which his father began to entertain against him.

"It is well the Douglas is on the marches," said the King. "His breast, like those of his ancestors, has ever been the best bulwark of Scotland."

"Then woe betide us if he should turn his back," said the incorrigible Rothsay.

"Dare you impeach the courage of Douglas?" replied the King, extremely chafed.

"No man dare question the Earl's courage," said Rothsay; "it is certain as his pride;—But his luck may be something doubted, else have the annals of his house given him the name of Tine-man * for nothing."

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* *Tine-man. i. e.* Lose-man.

"By Saint Andrew, Robin!" exclaimed his father, "thou art like a screech-owl—every word thou sayest betokens strife and calamity."

"I am silent, father," answered the youth.

"And what news of our Highland disturbances?" continued the King, addressing the Prior.

"I trust they have assumed a favourable aspect," answered the clergyman. "The fire which threatened the whole country is likely to be drenched out by the blood of some forty or fifty kerne; for the two great confederacies have agreed, by solemn indenture of arms, to decide their quarrel with such weapons as your Highness may name, and in your royal presence, in such place as shall be appointed, on the 30th of March next to come, being Palm Sunday; the number of combatants being limited to thirty on each side, and the fight to be maintained to extremity, since they affectionately make humble suit and petition to your Majesty, that you will parentally condescend to wave for the day your royal privilege of interrupting the combat, by flinging down of truncheon, or crying of Ho!

until the battle shall be utterly fought to an end."

"The wild savages!" exclaimed the King; "would they limit our best and dearest royal privilege, that of putting a stop to strife, and crying truce to battle?—Will they remove the only motive which could bring me to the butcherly spectacle of their combat?—Would they fight like men, or like their own mountain wolves?"

"My lord," said Albany; "the Earl of Crawford and I had presumed, without consulting you, to ratify that preliminary, for the adoption of which we saw much and pressing reason."

"How! the Earl of Crawford!" said the King. "Methinks he is a young counsellor on such grave occurrents."

"He is," replied Albany, "notwithstanding his early years, of such esteem among his Highland neighbours, that I could have done little with them but for his aid and influence."

"Hear this, young Rothsay!" said the King reproachfully to his heir.

"I pity Crawford, Sire," replied the Prince. "He has too early lost a father, whose councils would have better become such a season as this."

The King turned next towards Albany with a look of triumph, at the filial affection which his son displayed in his reply.

Albany proceeded without emotion. "It is not the life of these Highlandmen, but their death, which is to be profitable to this commonwealth of Scotland; and truly it seemed to the Earl of Crawford and myself most desirable that the combat should be a strife of extermination."

"Marry," said the Prince, "if such be the juvenile policy of Lindsay, he will be a merciful ruler some ten or twelve years hence! Out upon a boy, that is hard of heart before he has hair upon his lip! Better he had contented himself with fighting cocks on Fastern's Even, than laying schemes for massacring men on Palm Sunday, as if he were backing a Welsh main, where all must fight to death."

"Robin says right, Albany," said the King

"it were unlike a Christian Monarch to give way in this point. I cannot consent to see men battle until they are all hewn down like cattle in the shambles. It would sicken me to look at it, and the warder would drop from my hand for mere lack of strength to hold it."

"It would drop unheeded," said Albany. "Let me entreat your Grace to recollect, that you only give up a royal privilege, which, exercised, would win you no respect, since it would receive no obedience. Were your Majesty to throw down your warder when the war is high, and these men's blood is hot, it would meet no more regard than if a sparrow should drop among a herd of battling wolves the straw which he was carrying to his nest. Nothing will separate them but the exhaustion of slaughter; and better they sustain it at the hands of each other, than from the swords of such troops as might attempt to separate them at your Majesty's commands. An attempt to keep the peace by violence, would be construed into an ambush laid for them; both parties would unite to resist it,—the slaughter would be the same, and the

hoped-for results of future peace would be utterly disappointed."

"There is even too much truth in what you say, brother Robin," replied the flexible King. "To little purpose is it to command what I cannot enforce; and, although I have the unhappiness to do so each day of my life, it were needless to give such a public example of royal impotency, before the crowds who may assemble to behold this spectacle. Let these savage men, therefore, work their bloody will to the uttermost upon each other; I will not attempt to forbid what I cannot prevent them from executing.—Heaven help this wretched country! I will to my oratory and pray for her, since to aid her by hand and head is alike denied to me. Father Prior, I pray the support of your arm."

"Nay, but, brother," said Albany, "forgive me if I remind you, that we must hear the matter between the citizens of Perth and Ramorny, about the death of a townsman——"

"True, true—" said the Monarch, reseating himself; "more violence—more battle—Oh, Scotland! Scotland! if the best blood of thy

bravest children could enrich thy barren soil, what land on earth would excel thee in fertility! When is it that a white hair is seen on the beard of a Scottish man, unless he be some wretch like thy sovereign, protected from murder by impotence, to witness the scenes of slaughter to which he cannot put a period?—Let them come in—delay them not. They are in haste to kill, and grudge each other each fresh breath of their Creator's blessed air. The demon of strife and slaughter hath possessed the whole land!"

As the mild Prince threw himself back on his seat, with an air of impatience and anger not very usual with him, the door at the lower end of the room was unclosed, and, advancing from the gallery into which it led, (where in perspective was seen a guard of the Bute-men, or Brandanes, under arms,) came, in mournful procession, the widow of poor Oliver, led by Sir Patrick Charteris, with as much respect as if she had been a lady of the first rank. Behind them came two women of good, the wives of magistrates of the city, both in mourning gar-

ments, one bearing the infant, and the other leading the elder child. The Smith followed in his best attire, and wearing over his buff-coat a scarf of crape. Bailie Craigdallie, and a brother magistrate, closed the mournful procession, exhibiting similar marks of mourning.

The good King's transitory passion was gone the instant he looked on the pallid countenance of the sorrowing widow, and beheld the unconsciousness of the innocent orphans who had sustained so great a loss; and when Sir Patrick Charteris had assisted Magdalen Proudfute to kneel down, and, still holding her hand, kneeled himself on one knee, it was with a sympathetic tone that King Robert asked her name and business. She made no answer, but muttered something, looking towards her conductor.

"Speak for the poor woman, Sir Patrick Charteris," said the King, "and tell us the cause of her seeking our presence."

"So please you, my liege," answered Sir Patrick, rising up, "this woman, and these unhappy orphans, make plaint to your Highness upon Sir John Ramorny of Ramorny, Knight,

that by him, or by some of his household, her umquhile husband, Oliver Proudfute, freeman and burgess of Perth, was slain upon the streets of the city on the Eve of Shrove Tuesday, or morning of Ash Wednesday."

"Woman," replied the King, with much kindness, "thou art gentle by sex, and should'st be pitiful even by thy affliction; for our own calamity ought to make us—nay, I think it doth make us—merciful to others. Thy husband hath only trodden the path appointed to us all."

"In his case," said the widow, "my liege must remember it has been a brief and a bloody one."

"I agree he hath had foul measure. But since I have been unable to protect him, as I confess was my royal duty, I am willing, in atonement, to support thee and these orphans, as well, or better, than you lived in the days of your husband; only do thou pass from this charge, and be not the occasion of spilling more life. Remember, I put before you the choice betwixt practising mercy and pursuing vengeance, and that betwixt plenty and penury."

"It is true, my liege, we are poor," answered the widow, with unshaken firmness; "but I and my children will feed with the beasts of the field, ere we live on the price of my husband's blood. I demand the combat by my champion, as you are belted knight and crowned King."

"I knew it would be so!" said the King, aside to Albany. "In Scotland, the first words stammered by an infant, and the last uttered by a dying grey-beard, are—'combat—blood—revenge.'—It skills not arguing further. Admit the defendants."

Sir John Ramorny entered the apartment. He was dressed in a long furred robe, such as men of quality wore when they were unarmed. Concealed by the folds of drapery, his wounded arm was supported by a scarf, or sling of crimson silk, and with the left arm he leaned on a youth, who, scarcely beyond the years of boyhood, bore on his brow the deep impression of early thought, and premature passion. This was that celebrated Lindsay, Earl of Crawford, who, in his afterdays, was known by the epithet

of the Tiger Earl, and who ruled the great and rich valley of Strathmore with the absolute power and unrelenting cruelty of a feudal tyrant. Two or three gentlemen, friends of the Earl, or of his own, countenanced Sir John Ramorny by their presence on this occasion. The charge was again stated, and met by a broad denial on the part of the accused; and in reply, the challengers offered to prove their assertion by an appeal to the ordeal of bier-right.

"I am not bound," answered Sir John Ramorny, "to submit to this ordeal, since I can prove, by the evidence of my late royal master, that I was in my own lodgings, lying on my bed, ill at ease, while this Provost and these Bailies pretend I was committing a crime to which I had neither will nor temptation. I can therefore be no just object of suspicion."

"I can aver," said the Prince, "that I saw and conversed with Sir John Ramorny about some matters concerning my own household, on the very night when this murder was a-doing. I therefore know that he was ill at ease, and could not in person commit the deed in ques-

tion. But I know nothing of the employment of his attendants, and will not take it upon me to say that some one of them may not have been guilty of the crime now charged on them."

Sir John Ramorny had, during the beginning of this speech, looked round with an air of defiance, which was somewhat disconcerted by the concluding sentence of Rothsay's speech. "I thank your Highness," he said, with a smile, "for your cautious and limited testimony in my behalf. He was wise who wrote, 'Put not your faith in Princes.'"

"If you have no other evidence of your innocence, Sir John Ramorny," said the King, "we may not, in respect to your followers, refuse to the injured widow and orphans, the complainers, the grant of a proof by ordeal of bier-right, unless any of them should prefer that of combat. For yourself, you are, by the Prince's evidence, freed from the attaint."

"My liege," answered Sir John, "I can take warrant upon myself for the innocence of my household and followers."

"Why so a monk or a woman might speak,"

said Sir Patrick Charteris. "In knightly language, wilt thou, Sir John de Ramorny, do battle with me in the behalf of thy followers?"

"The Provost of Perth had not obtained time to name the word combat," said Ramorny, "ere I would have accepted it. But I am not at present fit to hold a lance."

"I am glad of it, under your favour, Sir John—There will be the less bloodshed," said the King. "You must therefore produce your followers according to your steward's household book, in the great church of St John's, that, in presence of all whom it may concern, they may purge themselves of this accusation. See that every man of them do appear at the time of High Mass, otherwise your honour may be sorely tainted."

"They shall attend to a man," said Sir John Ramorny. Then bowing low to the King, he directed himself to the young Duke of Rothsay, and making a deep obeisance, spoke so as to be heard by him alone. "You have used me generously, my lord!—One word of your lips could have ended this controversy, and you have refused to speak it!—"

"On my life," whispered the Prince, "I spake as far as the extreme verge of truth and conscience would permit. I think thou could'st not expect I should frame lies for thee;—and after all, John, in my broken recollections of that night, I do bethink me of a butcherly-looking mute, with a curtal-axe, much like such a one as may have done yonder night-job.—Ha! have I touched you, Sir Knight?"

Ramorny made no answer, but turned away as precipitately as if some one had pressed suddenly on his wounded arm, and regained his lodgings with the Earl of Crawford; to whom, though disposed for anything rather than revelry, he was obliged to offer a splendid collation, to acknowledge in some degree his sense of the countenance which the young noble had afforded him.

CHAPTER X.

When, after an entertainment, the prolonging of which was like torture to the wounded knight, the Earl of Crawford at length took horse, to go to his distant quarters in the Castle of Dupplin, where he resided as a guest, the Knight of Ramorny retired into his sleeping apartment, agonized by pains of body and anxiety of mind. Here he found Henbane Dwining, on whom it was his hard fate to depend for consolation in both respects. The physician, with his affectation of extreme humility, hoped he saw his exalted patient merry and happy.

"Merry as a mad dog!" said Ramorny, "and happy as the wretch whom the cur hath bitten, and who begins to feel the approach of

the ravening madness. That ruthless boy saw my agony, and spared not a single carouse. I must do him *justice*, forsooth! If I had done justice to him and to the world, I had thrown him out of window, and cut short a career, which, if he grow up as he has begun, will prove a source of misery to all Scotland, but especially to Tayside.—Take heed as thou undoest the ligatures, chirurgeon; the touch of a fly's wing on that raw glowing stump were like a dagger to me."

"Fear not, my noble patron," said the leech, with a chuckling laugh of enjoyment, which he vainly endeavoured to disguise under a tone of affected sensibility. "We will apply some fresh balsam, and—he, he, he!—relieve your knightly honour of the irritation which you sustain so firmly."

"Firmly, man?" said Ramorny, grinning with pain; "I sustain it as I would the scorching flames of purgatory—the bone seems made of red-hot iron—thy greasy ointment will hiss as it drops upon the wound—And yet it is December's ice, compared to the fever-fit of my mind!"

"We will first use our emollients upon the body, my noble patron," said Dwining; "and then, with your knighthood's permission, your servant will try his art on the troubled mind —though I fain hope even the mental pain also may in some degree depend on the irritation of the wound, and that, abated as I trust the corporeal pangs will soon be, perhaps the stormy feelings of the mind may subside of themselves."

"Henbane Dwining," said the patient, as he felt the pain of his wound assuaged, "thou art a precious and invaluable leech, but some things are beyond thy power. Thou canst stupify my bodily sense of this raging agony, but thou canst not teach me to bear the scorn of the boy whom I have brought up, whom I loved, Dwining—for I did love him,—dearly love him! The worst of my ill deeds have been done to flatter his vices—and he grudged me a word of his mouth, when a word would have allayed this cumber. He smiled, too—I saw him smile when yon paltry Provost, the companion and patron of wretched burghers, defied me, whom this heartless Prince knew to be unable to bear arms.

—Ere I forget or forgive it, thou thyself shalt preach up the pardoning of injuries!—And then the care for to-morrow.—Think'st thou, Henbane Dwining, that, in very reality, the wounds of the slaughtered corpse will gape, and shed tears of fresh blood at the murderer's approach?"

"I cannot tell, my lord, save by report," said Dwining, "which avouches the fact."

"The brute Bonthron," said Ramorny, "is startled at the apprehension of such a thing, and speaks of being rather willing to stand the combat. What think'st thou?—he is a fellow of steel."

"It is the armourer's trade to deal with steel," replied Dwining.

"Were Bonthron to fall it would little grieve me," said Ramorny; "though I should miss an useful hand."

"I well believe your lordship will not sorrow as for that you lost last—Excuse my pleasantry—he, he, he!—But what are the useful properties of this fellow Bonthron?"

"Those of a bull-dog," answered the knight; "he worries without barking."

"You have no fear of his confessing?" said the physician.

"Who can tell what the dread of approaching death may do?" replied the patient. "He has already shown a timorousness entirely alien from his ordinary sullenness of nature; he that would scarce wash his hands after he had slain a man, is now afraid to see a dead body bleed."

"Well," said the leech, "I must do somewhat for him if I can, since it was to further my revenge that he struck yonder downright blow, though by ill luck it lighted not where it was intended."

"And whose fault was that, timid villain," said Ramorny, "save thine own, who marked a rascal deer for a buck of the first head?"

"Benedicite, noble sir," replied the mediciner; "would you have me, who know little save of chamber practice, be as skilful of woodcraft as your noble self, or tell hart from hind, doe from roe, in a glade at midnight? I misdoubted me little when I saw the figure run past us to the smith's habitation in the wynd, habited like a morrice-dancer; and yet my mind partly misgave me whether it was our man, for

methought he seemed less of stature. But when he came out again, after so much time as to change his dress, and swaggered onwards with buff-coat and steel-cap, whistling after the armourer's wonted fashion, I do own I was mistaken, and loosed your knighthood's bull-dog upon him, who did his devoir most duly, though he pulled down the wrong deer. Therefore, unless the accursed Smith kills our poor friend stone-dead on the spot, I am determined, if art may do it, that the ban-dog Bonthron shall not miscarry."

"It will put thine art to the test, man of medicine," said Ramorny; "for know, that having the worst of the combat, if our champion be not killed stone-dead in the lists, he will be drawn forth of them by the heels, and without further ceremony knitted up to the gallows, as convicted of the murder; and when he hath swung there like a loose tassel for an hour or so, I think thou wilt hardly take it in hand to cure his broken neck."

"I am of a different opinion, may it please your knighthood," answered Dwining, gently. "I will carry him off from the very foot of the

gallows into the land of faery, like King Arthur, or Sir Huon of Bourdeaux, or Ugero the Dane; or I will, if I please, suffer him to dangle on the gibbet for a certain number of minutes or hours, and then whisk him away from the sight of all, with as much ease as the wind wafts away the withered leaf."

"This is idle boasting, Sir Leech," replied Ramorny. "The whole mob of Perth will attend him to the gallows, each more eager than another to see the retainer of a nobleman die, for the slaughter of a cuckoldly citizen. There will be a thousand of them round the gibbet's foot."

"And were there ten thousand," said Dwining, "shall I, who am a high clerk, and have studied in Spain, and Araby itself, not be able to deceive the eyes of this hoggish herd of citizens, when the pettiest juggler that ever dealt in legerdemain can gull even the sharp observation of your most intelligent knighthood? I tell you, I will put the change on them as if I were in possession of Keddie's ring."

"If thou speakest truth," answered the knight, "and I think thou darest not palter with me on such a theme, thou must have the

aid of Satan, and I will have nought to do with him.—I disown and defy him."

Dwining indulged in his internal chuckling laugh when he heard his patron testify his defiance of the foul Fiend, and saw him second it by crossing himself. He composed himself, however, upon observing Ramorny's aspect become very stern, and said, with tolerable gravity, though a little interrupted by the effort necessary to suppress his mirthful mood,—

"Confederacy, most devout sir; confederacy is the soul of jugglery. But—he, he, he!—I have not the honour to be—he, he!—an ally of the gentleman of whom you speak—in whose existence I am—he, he!—no very profound believer, though your knightship, doubtless, hath better opportunities of acquaintance."

"Proceed, rascal, and without that sneer, which thou mayest otherwise dearly pay for."

"I will, most undaunted," replied Dwining. "Know that I have my confederate too, else my skill were little worth."

"And who may that be, pray you?"

"Stephen Smotherwell, if it like your ho-

nour, lockman* of this Fair City. I marvel your knighthood knows him not."

"And I marvel thy knaveship knows him not on professional acquaintance," replied Ramorny; "but I see thy nose is unslit, thy ears yet uncropped, and if thy shoulders are scared or branded, thou art wise for using a high-collared jerkin."

"He, he! your honour is pleasant," said the mediciner. "It is not by personal circumstances that I have acquired the intimacy of Stephen Smotherwell, but on account of a certain traffic betwixt us, in which, an't please you, I exchange certain sums of silver for the bodies, heads, and limbs, of those who die by aid of friend Stephen."

"Wretch!" exclaimed the knight, with horror, "is it to compose charms and forward works of witchcraft, that you trade for these miserable relics of mortality?"

"He, he, he!—No, an it please your knight-

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* Executioner. So called because one of his dues consisted in taking a small ladlefull (Scottice, *lock*) of meal, out of every caskful exposed in the market.

hood," answered the mediciner, much amused with the ignorance of his patron; "but we who are knights of the scalpel, are accustomed to practise careful carving of the limbs of defunct persons, which we call dissection, whereby we discover, by examination of a dead member, how to deal with one belonging to a living man, which hath become diseased through injury or otherwise. Ah! if your honour saw my poor laboratory, I could show you heads and hands, feet and lungs, which have been long supposed to be rotting in the mould. The skull of Wallace, stolen from London Bridge; the heart of Sir Simon Fraser, that never feared man; the lovely skull of the fair Jean Logie. Oh, had I but had the fortune to have preserved the chivalrous hand of mine honoured patron!"

"Out upon thee, slave!—Thinkest thou to disgust me with thy catalogue of horrors?—Tell me at once where thy discourse drives. How can thy traffic with the hang-dog executioner be of avail to serve me, or to help my servant Bonthron?"

"Nay, I do not recommend it to your knighthood, save in an extremity," replied Dwining.

"But we will suppose the battle fought, and our cock beaten. Now we must first possess him with the certainty, that, if unable to gain the day, we will at least save him from the hangman, provided he confess nothing which can prejudice your knighthood's honour."

"Ha!—ay, a thought strikes me," said Ramorny. "We can do more than this—we can place a word in Bonthron's mouth that will be troublesome enough to him whom I am bound to curse, for being the cause of my misfortune. Let us to the ban-dog's kennel, and explain to him what is to be done in every view of the question. If we can persuade him to stand the bier-ordeal, it may be a mere bugbear, and in that case we are safe. If he take the combat, he is fierce as a baited bear, and may, perchance, master his opponent; then we are more than safe—we are revenged. If Bonthron himself is vanquished, we will put thy device in exercise; and if thou canst manage it cleanly, we may dictate his confession, take the advantage of it, as I will show thee on further conference, and make a giant stride towards satisfaction for my wrongs.—Still there remains

one hazard. Suppose our mastiff mortally wounded in the lists, who shall prevent his growling out some species of confession different from what we would recommend?"

"Marry, that can his mediciner," said Dwining. "Let me wait on him, and lay but a finger on his wound, and trust me he shall betray no confidence."

"Why, there's a willing fiend, that needs neither pushing nor prompting!" said Ramorny.

"As I trust I shall need neither in your knighthood's service."

"We will go indoctrinate our agent," continued the Knight. "We shall find him pliant; for hound as he is, he knows those who feed from those who brow-beat him; and he holds a late royal master of mine in deep hate for some injurious treatment and base terms which he received at his hand. I must also farther concert with thee the particulars of thy practice, for saving the ban-dog from the hands of the herd of citizens."

We leave this worthy pair of friends to their secret practices, of which we shall afterwards see the results. They were, although of different

qualities, as well matched for device and execution of criminal projects, as the grey-hound is to destroy the game which the slow-hound raises, or the slow-hound to track the prey which the gaze-hound discovers by the eye. Pride and selfishness were the characteristics of both; but from the difference of rank, education, and talents, they had assumed the most different appearance in the two individuals.

Nothing could less resemble the high-blown ambition of the favourite courtier, the successful gallant, and the bold warrior, than the submissive unassuming mediciner, who seemed even to court and delight in insult; whilst, in his secret soul, he felt himself possessed of a superiority of knowledge,—a power, both of science and of mind, which placed the rude nobles of the day infinitely beneath him. So conscious was Henbane Dwining of this elevation, that, like a keeper of wild beasts, he sometimes adventured, for his own amusement, to rouse the stormy passions of such men as Ramorny, trusting, with his humble manner, to elude the turmoil he had excited, as an Indian boy will launch his light canoe, secure from

its very fragility, upon a broken surf, in which the boat of an argosy would be assuredly dashed to pieces. That the feudal baron should despise the humble practitioner in medicine, was a matter of course; but Ramorny felt not the less the influence which Dwining exercised over him, and was in the encounter of their wits often mastered by him, as the most eccentric efforts of a fiery horse are overcome by a boy of twelve years old, if he has been bred to the arts of the manege. But the contempt of Dwining for Ramorny was far less qualified. He regarded the knight, in comparison with himself, as scarcely rising above the brute creation; capable indeed of working destruction, as the bull with his horns, or the wolf with his fangs, but mastered by mean prejudices, and a slave to priestcraft, in which phrase Dwining included religion of every kind. On the whole, he considered Ramorny as one whom nature had assigned to him as a serf, to mine for the gold which he worshipped, and the avaricious love of which was his greatest failing, though by no means his worst vice. He vindicated this sordid tenden-

cy in his own eyes, by persuading himself that it had its source in the love of power.

"Henbane Dwining," he said, as he gazed in delight upon the hoards which he had secretly amassed, and which he visited from time to time, "is no silly miser, that doats on those pieces for their golden lustre; it is the power with which they endow the possessor, which makes him thus adore them. What is there that these put not within your command? Do you love beauty, and are mean, deformed, infirm, and old?—here is a lure the fairest hawk of them all will stoop to. Are you feeble, weak, subject to the oppression of the powerful?—here is that will arm in your defence those more mighty than the petty tyrant whom you fear. Are you splendid in your wishes, and desire the outward show of opulence?—this dark chest contains many a wide range of hill and dale, many a fair forest full of game; the allegiance of a thousand vassals. Wish you for favour in courts, temporal or spiritual?—the smiles of kings, the pardon of popes and priests for old crimes, and the indulgence which encourages

priest-ridden fools to venture on new ones,—all these holy incentives to vice may be purchased for gold. Revenge itself, which the gods are said to reserve to themselves, doubtless because they envy humanity so sweet a morsel—revenge itself is to be bought by it. But it is also to be won by superior skill, and that is the nobler mode of reaching it. I will spare, then, my treasure for other uses, and accomplish my revenge gratis; or rather I will add the luxury of augmented wealth to the triumph of requited wrongs."

Thus thought Dwining, as, returned from his visit to Sir John Ramorny, he added the gold he had received for his various services to the mass of his treasure; and having gloated over the whole for a minute or two, turned the key on his concealed treasure-house, and walked forth on his visits to his patients, yielding the wall to every man whom he met, and bowing and doffing his bonnet to the poorest burgher that owned a petty booth, nay, to the artificers who gained their precarious bread by the labour of their welked hands.

"Caitiffs," was the thought of his heart, while he did such obeisance, "base, sodden-witted mechanics! did you know what this key could disclose, what foul weather from Heaven would prevent your unbonneting? what putrid kennel in your wretched hamlet, would be disgusting enough to make you scruple to fall down and worship the owner of such wealth? But I will make you feel my power, though it suits my humour to hide it. I will be an incubus to your city, since you have rejected me as a magistrate. Like the night-mare, I will hag-ride ye, yet remain invisible myself.—This miserable Ramorny too, he who, in losing his hand, has, like a poor artizan, lost the only valuable part of his frame, *he* heaps insulting language on me, as if anything which *he* can say had power to chafe a constant mind like mine! Yet while he calls me rogue, villain, and slave, he acts as wisely as if he should amuse himself by pulling hairs out of my head, while my hand had hold of his heart-strings. Every insult I can pay back instantly by a pang of bodily pain or mental agony—and—he! he!—I run

no long accounts with his knighthood, that must be allowed."

While the mediciner was thus indulging his diabolical musing, and passing, in his creeping manner, along the street, the cry of females was heard behind him.

"Ay, there he is, Our Lady be praised!—there is the most helpful man in Perth," said one voice.

"They may speak of knights and kings for redressing wrongs, as they call it—but give me worthy Master Dwining the pottercarrier, cummers," replied another.

At the same moment, the leech was surrounded, and taken hold of by the speakers, good women of the Fair City.

"How now—what's the matter?" said Dwining, "whose cow has calved?"

"There is no calving in the case," said one of the women, "but a poor fatherless wean dying; so come awa' wi' you, for our trust is constant in you, as Bruce said to Donald of the Isles."

"*Opiferque per orbem dicor*," said Henbane Dwining. "What is the child dying of?"

"The croup—the croup," screamed one of the gossips; "the innocent is rouping like a corbie."

"*Cynanche trachealis*—that disease makes brief work. Show me the house instantly," continued the mediciner, who was in the habit of exercising his profession liberally, notwithstanding his natural avarice, and humanely, in spite of his natural malignity. As we can suspect him of no better principle, his motive was probably vanity and the love of his art.

He would nevertheless have declined giving his attendance in the present case, had he known whither the kind gossips were conducting him, in time sufficient to frame an apology. But ere he guessed whither he was going, the leech was hurried into the house of the late Oliver Proudfute, from which he heard the chant of the women, as they swathed and dressed the corpse of the umquhile Bonnet-maker, for the ceremony of next morning; of which chant, the following verses may be received as a modern imitation.

1.

Viewless Essence, thin and bare,
Well nigh melted into air;
Still with fondness hovering near
The earthly form thou once didst wear;

2.

Pause upon thy pinion's flight,
Be thy course to left or right;
Be thou doom'd to soar or sink,
Pause upon the awful brink.

3.

To avenge the deed expelling
Thee untimely from thy dwelling,
Mystic force thou shalt retain
O'er the blood and o'er the brain.

4.

When the form thou shalt espy
That darken'd on thy closing eye;
When the footstep thou shalt hear,
That thrill'd upon thy dying ear;

5.

Then strange sympathies shall wake,
The flesh shall thrill, the nerves shall quake;
The wounds renew their clotter'd flood,
And every drop cry blood for blood!

Hardened as he was, the physician felt reluctance to pass the threshold of the man to whose death he had been so directly, though,

so far as the individual was concerned, mistakingly accessory.

"Let me pass on, women," he said, "my art can only help the living—the dead are past our power."

"Nay, but your patient is up stairs—the youngest orphan——"

Dwining was compelled to go into the house. But he was surprised, when, the instant he stepped over the threshold, the gossips, who were busied with the dead body, stinted suddenly in their song, while one said to the others,—

"In God's name, who entered?—that was a large gout of blood!"

"Not so," said another voice, "it is a drop of the liquid balm."

"Nay, cummer, it was blood—Again I say, who entered the house even now?"

One looked out from the apartment into the little entrance, where Dwining, under pretence of not distinctly seeing the trap-ladder by which he was to ascend into the upper part of this house of lamentation, was delaying his progress purposely, disconcerted with what had reached him of the conversation.

"Nay, it is only worthy Master Henbane Dwining," answered one of the sibyls.

"Only Master Dwining?" replied the one who had first spoken, in a tone of acquiescence; "our best helper in need?—then it must have been balm sure enough."

"Nay," said the other, "it may have been blood nevertheless—for the leech, look you, when the body was found, was commanded by the magistrates to probe the wound with his instruments, and how could the poor dead corpse know that that was done with good purpose?"

"Ay, truly, cummer; and as poor gossip Oliver often mistook friends for enemies while he was in life, his judgment cannot be thought to have mended now."

Dwining heard no more, being now forced up stairs into a species of garret, where Magdalen sat on her widowed bed, clasping to her bosom her infant, which, already black in the face, and uttering the gasping crowing sound, which gives the popular name to the complaint, seemed on the point of rendering up its brief existence. A Dominican monk sat near

the bed, holding the other child in his arms, and seeming from time to time to speak a word or two of spiritual consolation, or intermingle some observation on the child's disorder.

The mediciner cast upon the good father a single glance, filled with that ineffable disdain which men of science entertain against interlopers. His own aid was instant and efficacious; he snatched the child from the despairing mother, stripped its throat, and opened a vein, which, as it bled freely, relieved the little patient instantaneously. In a brief space every dangerous symptom disappeared, and Dwining, having bound up the wound, replaced the infant in the arms of the half distracted mother.

The poor woman's distress for her husband's loss, which had been suspended during the extremity of the child's danger, now returned on Magdalen with the force of an augmented torrent, which has borne down the dam-dike that for a while interrupted its waves.

"Oh, learned sir," she said, "you see a poor woman of her that you once knew a richer—But the hands that restored this bairn to my

arms must not leave this house empty. Generous, kind Master Dwining, accept of his beads —they are made of ebony and silver—he aye liked to have his things as handsome as any gentleman—and liker he was in all his ways to a gentleman than any one of us, and even so came of it."

With these words, in a mute passion of grief, she pressed to her breast and to her lips the chaplet of her deceased husband, and proceeded to thrust it into Dwining's hands.

"Take it," she said, "for the love of one who loved you well.—Ah! he used ever to say, if ever man could be brought back from the brink of the grave, it must be by Master Dwining's guidance.—And his ain bairn is brought back this blessed day, and he is lying there stark and stiff, and kens naething of its health and sickness! O, woe is me, and wala wa!—But take the beads, and think on his puir soul, as you put them through your fingers; he will be freed from purgatory the sooner that good people pray to assoilzie him."

"Take back your beads, cummer—I know

no legerdemain—can do no conjuring tricks," said the mediciner, who, more moved than perhaps his rugged nature had anticipated, endeavoured to avoid receiving the ill-omened gift. But his last words gave offence to the churchman, whose presence he had not recollected when he uttered them.

"How now, sir leech!" said the Dominican; "do you call prayers for the dead juggling tricks? I know that Chaucer, the English Maker, says of you mediciners, that your study is but little on the Bible. Our mother, the Church, hath nodded of late, but her eyes are now opened to discern friends from foes; and be well assured—"

"Nay, reverend father," said Dwining, "you take me at too great advantage. I said I could do no miracles, and was about to add, that as the church certainly could work such conclusions, those rich beads should be deposited in your hands, to be applied as they may best benefit the soul of the deceased."

He dropped the beads into the Dominican's

hand, and escaped from the house of mourning.

"This was a strangely timed visit," he said to himself, when he got safe out of doors. "I hold such things cheap as any can; yet, though it is but a silly fancy, I am glad I saved the squalling child's life.—But I must to my friend Smotherwell, whom I have no doubt to bring to my purpose in the matter of Bonthron; and thus I shall save two lives, and have destroyed only one."

CHAPTER XI.

The High Church of St John's in Perth, being that of the patron saint of the burgh, had been selected by the Magistrates as that in which the community was likely to have most fair play for the display of the ordeal. The churches and convents of the Dominicans, Carthusians, and others of the regular clergy, had been highly endowed by the king and nobles, and therefore it was the universal cry of the city-council, that "their ain good auld St John," of whose good graces they thought themselves

sure, ought to be fully confided in, and preferred to the new patrons, for whom the Dominicans, Carthusians, Carmelites, and others, had founded newer seats around the Fair City. The disputes between the regular and secular clergy added to the jealousy which dictated this choice of the spot in which Heaven was to display a species of miracle, upon a direct appeal to the divine decision in a case of doubtful guilt; and the town-clerk was as anxious that the church of St John should be preferred, as if there had been a faction in the body of saints for and against the interests of that beautiful town.

Many, therefore, were the petty intrigues entered into and disconcerted, for the purpose of fixing on the church. But the Magistrates, considering it as a matter touching in a close degree the honour of the city, determined, with judicious confidence in the justice and impartiality of their patron, to confide the issue to the influence of St John.

It was, therefore, after high mass had been performed, with the greatest solemnity of which

circumstances rendered the ceremony capable, and after the most repeated and fervent prayers had been offered to Heaven by the crowded assembly, that preparations were made for appealing to the direct judgment of Heaven on the mysterious murder of the unfortunate Bonnet-maker.

The scene presented that effect of imposing solemnity, which the rites of the Catholic church are so well qualified to produce. The eastern window, richly and variously painted, streamed down a torrent of chequered light upon the high altar. On the bier placed before it were stretched the mortal remains of the murdered man, his arms folded on his breast, and his palms joined together, with the fingers pointed upwards, as if the senseless clay was itself appealing to Heaven for vengeance against those who had violently divorced the immortal spirit from its mangled tenement.

Close to the bier was placed the throne, which supported Robert of Scotland, and his brother Albany. The Prince sat upon a lower stool,

beside his father; an arrangement which occasioned some observation, as Albany's seat being little distinguished from that of the King, the heir-apparent, though of full age, seemed to be degraded beneath his uncle in the sight of the assembled people of Perth. The bier was so placed, as to leave the view of the body it sustained open to the greater part of the multitude assembled in the church.

At the head of the bier stood the Knight of Kinfauns, the challenger, and at the foot the young Earl of Crawford, as representing the defendant. The evidence of the Duke of Rothsay in expurgation, as it was termed, of Sir John Ramorny, had exempted him from the necessity of attendance as a party subjected to the ordeal; and his illness served as a reason for his remaining at home. His household, including those who, though immediately in waiting upon Sir John, were accounted the Prince's domestics, and had not yet received their dismissal, amounted to eight or ten persons, most of them esteemed men of profligate habits, and who might therefore be deemed capable, in the riot of a festival

evening, of committing the slaughter of the Bonnet-maker. They were drawn up in a row on the left side of the church, and wore a species of white cassock, resembling the dress of a penitentiary. All eyes being bent on them, several of this band seemed so much disconcerted, as to excite among the spectators strong prepossessions of their guilt. The real murderer had a countenance incapable of betraying him, —a sullen, dark look, which neither the feast nor wine-cup could enliven, and which the peril of discovery and death could not render dejected.

We have already noticed the posture of the dead body. The face was bare, as were the breast and arms. The rest of the corpse was shrouded in a winding-sheet of the finest linen, so that, if blood should flow from any place which was covered, it could not fail to be instantly manifest.

High mass having been performed, followed by a solemn invocation to the Deity, that he would be pleased to protect the innocent, and make known the guilty, Eviot, Sir John Ramorny's page, was summoned to undergo the ordeal. He advanced with an ill-assured step. Perhaps he thought his internal consciousness

that Bonthron must have been the assassin, might be sufficient to implicate him in the murder, though he was not directly accessary to it. He paused before the bier; and his voice faltered, as he swore by all that was created in seven days and seven nights, by heaven, by hell, by his part of paradise, and by the God and author of all, that he was free and sackless of the bloody deed done upon the corpse before which he stood, and on whose breast he made the sign of the cross, in evidence of the appeal. No consequences ensued. The body remained stiff as before; the curdled wounds gave no sign of blood.

The citizens looked on each other with faces of blank disappointment. They had persuaded themselves of Eviot's guilt; and their suspicions had been confirmed by his irresolute manner. Their surprise at his escape was therefore extreme. The other followers of Ramorny took heart, and advanced to take the oath, with a boldness which increased, as one by one they performed the ordeal, and were declared, by the

voice of the judges, free and innocent of every suspicion attaching to them on account of the death of Oliver Proudfute.

But there was one individual, who did not partake that increasing confidence. The name of "Bonthron—Bonthron!" sounded three times through the aisles of the church; but he who owned it acknowledged the call no otherwise than by a sort of shuffling motion with his feet, as if he had been suddenly affected with a fit of the palsy.

"Speak, dog," whispered Eviot, "or prepare for a dog's death!"

But the murderer's brain was so much disturbed by the sight before him, that the judges, beholding his deportment, doubted whether to ordain him to be dragged before the bier, or to pronounce judgment in default; and it was not, until he was asked for the last time, whether he would submit to the ordeal, that he answered, with his usual brevity,—

"I will not;—what do I know what juggling tricks may be practised to take a poor man's

life ?—I offer the combat to any man who says I harmed that dead body."

And, according to usual form, he threw his glove upon the floor of the church.

Henry Smith stepped forward, amidst the murmured applauses of his fellow-citizens, which even the august presence could not entirely suppress; and lifting the ruffian's glove, which he placed in his bonnet, laid down his own in the usual form, as a gage of battle. But Bonthron raised it not.

"He is no match for me," growled the savage, "nor fit to lift my glove. I follow the Prince of Scotland, in attending on his Master of Horse. This fellow is a wretched mechanic."

Here the Prince interrupted him. "Thou follow *me*, caitiff! I discharge thee from my service on the spot.—Take him in hand, Smith, and beat him as thou didst never thump anvil!—The villain is both guilty and recreant. It sickens me even to look at him; and if my royal father will be ruled by me, he will give the parties two handsome Scottish axes, and we will see

which of them turns out the best fellow before the day is half an hour older."

This was readily assented to by the Earl of Crawford and Sir Patrick Charteris, the godfathers of the parties, who, as the combatants were men of inferior rank, agreed that they should fight in steel caps, buff jackets, and with axes; and that as soon as they could be prepared for the combat.

The lists were appointed in the Skinners' Yards, a neighbouring space of ground, occupied by the corporation from which it had the name, and who quickly cleared a space of about thirty feet by twenty-five, for the combatants. Thither thronged the nobles, priests, and commons,—all excepting the old King, who, detesting such scenes of blood, retired to his residence, and devolved the charge of the field upon the Earl of Errol, Lord High Constable, to whose office it more particularly belonged. The Duke of Albany watched the whole proceeding with a close and wary eye. His nephew gave the scene the heedless degree of notice which corresponded with his character.

When the combatants appeared in the lists, nothing could be more striking than the contrast betwixt the manly, cheerful countenance of the Smith, whose sparkling bright eye seemed already beaming with the victory he hoped for, and the sullen, downcast aspect of the brutal Bonthron, who looked as if he were some obscene bird, driven into sunshine out of the shelter of its darksome haunts. They made oath severally, each to the truth of his quarrel; a ceremony which Henry Gow performed with serene and manly confidence—Bonthron with a dogged resolution, which induced the Duke of Rothsay to say to the High Constable, "Didst thou ever, my dear Errol, behold such a mixture of malignity, cruelty, and I think fear, as in that fellow's countenance?"

"He is not comely," said the Earl, "but a powerful knave as I have seen."

"I'll gage a hogshead of wine with you, my good lord, that he loses the day. Henry the armourer is as strong as he, and much more active. And then look at his bold bearing! There is something in that other fellow that is

loathsome to look upon. Let them yoke presently, my dear Constable, for I am sick of beholding him."

The High-Constable then addressed the widow, who, in her deep weeds, and having her children still beside her, occupied a chair within the lists:—"Woman, do you willingly accept of this man, Henry the Smith, to do battle as your champion in this cause?"

"I do—I do, most willingly," answered Magdalen Proudfute; "and may the blessing of God and St John give him strength and fortune, since he strikes for the orphan and fatherless!"

"Then I pronounce this a fenced field of battle," said the Constable aloud. "Let no one dare, upon peril of his life, to interrupt this combat by word, speech, or look.—Sound trumpets, and fight, combatants!"

The trumpets flourished, and the combatants, advancing from the opposite end of the lists, with a steady and even pace, looked at each other attentively, well skilled in judging from the motion of the eye, the direction in which a blow was meditated. They halted opposite

to, and within reach of, each other, and in turn made more than one feint to strike, in order to ascertain the activity and vigilance of the opponent. At length, whether weary of these manœuvres, or fearing lest in a contest so conducted, his unwieldy strength would be foiled by the activity of the Smith, Bonthron heaved up his axe for a downright blow, adding the whole strength of his sturdy arms to the weight of the weapon in its descent. The Smith, however, avoided the stroke by stepping aside; for it was too forcible to be controlled by any guard which he could have interposed. Ere Bonthron recovered guard, Henry struck him a sideling blow on the steel head-piece, which prostrated him on the ground.

"Confess, or die," said the victor, placing his foot on the body of the vanquished, and holding to his throat the point of the axe, which terminated in a spike or poniard.

"I will confess," said the villain, glaring wildly upward on the sky. "Let me rise."

"Not till you have yielded," said Harry Smith.

"I do yield," again murmured Bonthron, and Henry proclaimed aloud that his antagonist was defeated.

The Dukes of Rothsay and Albany, the High Constable, and the Dominican Prior, now entered the lists, and addressing Bonthron, demanded if he acknowledged himself vanquished.

"I do," answered the miscreant.

"And guilty of the murder of Oliver Proudfute?"

"I am—but I mistook him for another."

"And whom didst thou intend to slay?" said the Prior. "Confess, my son, and merit thy pardon in another world; for with this thou hast little more to do."

"I took the slain man," answered the discomfited combatant, "for him whose hand has struck me down, whose foot now presses me."

"Blessed be the saints!" said the Prior; "now all those who doubt the virtue of the holy ordeal, may have their eyes opened to their error. Lo, he is trapped in the snare which he laid for the guiltless."

"I scarce ever saw the man before," said the Smith. "I never did wrong to him or his. —Ask him, an it please your reverence, why he should have thought of slaying me treacherously."

"It is a fitting question," answered the Prior.—"Give glory where it is due, my son, even though it is manifested by thy shame. For what reason would'st thou have waylaid this armourer, who says he never wronged thee?"

"He had wronged him whom I served," answered Bonthron; "and I meditated the deed by his command."

"By whose command?" asked the Prior.

Bonthron was silent for an instant, then growled out,—"He is too mighty for me to name."

"Hearken, my son," said the churchman; "tarry but a brief hour, and the mighty and the mean of this earth shall to thee alike be empty sounds. The sledge is even now preparing to drag thee to the place of execution. Therefore, son, once more I charge thee to consult thy

soul's weal by glorifying Heaven, and speaking the truth. Was it thy master, Sir John Ramorny, that stirred thee to so foul a deed?"

"No," answered the prostrate villain, "it was a greater than he." And at the same time he pointed with his finger to the Prince.

"Wretch!" said the astonished Duke of Rothsay; "do you dare to hint that *I* was your instigator?"

"You yourself, my lord," answered the unblushing ruffian.

"Die in thy falsehood, accursed slave!" said the Prince; and, drawing his sword, he would have pierced his calumniator, had not the Lord High Constable interposed with word and action.

"Your Grace must forgive my discharging mine office—this caitiff must be delivered into the hands of the executioner. He is unfit to be dealt with by any other, much less by your Highness."

"What? noble Earl," said Albany, aloud, and with much real or affected emotion, "would you let the dog pass alive from hence, to poi-

son the people's ears with false accusations against the Prince of Scotland?—I say, cut him to mammocks upon the spot!"

"Your Highness will pardon me," said the Earl of Errol; "I must protect him till his doom is executed."

"Then let him be gagged instantly," said Albany.—"And you, my royal nephew, why stand you there fixed in astonishment? Call your resolution up—speak to the prisoner—swear—protest by all that is sacred that you knew not of this felon deed.—See how the people look on each other, and whisper apart! My life on't that this lie spreads faster than any gospel truth.—Speak to them, royal kinsman, no matter what you say, so you be constant in denial."

"What, sir," said Rothsay, starting from his pause of surprise and mortification, and turning haughtily towards his uncle; "would you have me gage my royal word against that of an abject recreant? Let those who *can* believe the son of their sovereign, the descendant of Bruce, capable of laying ambush for the life of a poor

mechanic, enjoy the pleasure of thinking the villain's tale true."

"That will not I for one," said the Smith, bluntly. "I never did aught but what was in honour toward his royal Grace the Duke of Rothsay, and never received unkindness from him, in word, look, or deed; and I cannot think he would have given aim to such base practice."

"Was it in honour that you threw his Highness from the ladder in Curfew Street, upon Fastern's Even?" said Bonthron; "or think you the favour was received kindly or unkindly?"

This was so boldly said, and seemed so plausible, that it shook the Smith's opinion of the Prince's innocence.

"Alas, my lord," said he, looking sorrowfully towards Rothsay, "could your Highness seek an innocent fellow's life for doing his duty by a helpless maiden?—I would rather have died in these lists, than live to hear it said of the Bruce's heir!"

"Thou art a good fellow, Smith," said the Prince; "but I cannot expect thee to judge more wisely than others.—Away with that con-

vict to the gallows, and gibbet him alive an you will, that he may speak falsehood and spread scandal on us to the last prolonged moment of his existence!"

So saying, the Prince turned away from the lists, disdaining to notice the gloomy looks cast towards him, as the crowd made slow and reluctant way for him to pass, and expressing neither surprise nor displeasure at a deep hollow murmur, or groan, which accompanied his retreat. Only a few of his own immediate followers attended him from the field, though various persons of distinction had come there in his train. Even the lower class of citizens ceased to follow the unhappy Prince, whose former indifferent reputation had exposed him to so many charges of impropriety and levity, and around whom there seemed now darkening suspicions of the most atrocious nature.

He took his slow and thoughtful way to the church of the Dominicans; but the ill news, which fly proverbially fast, had reached his father's place of retirement, before he himself ap-

peared. On entering the palace and inquiring for the King, the Duke of Rothsay was surprised to be informed that he was in deep consultation with the Duke of Albany, who, mounting on horseback as the Prince left the lists, had reached the convent before him. He was about to use the privilege of his rank and birth, to enter the royal apartment, when MacLewis, the commander of the guard of Brandanes, gave him to understand, in the most respectful terms, that he had special instructions which forbade his admittance.

"Go at least, MacLewis, and let them know that I wait their pleasure," said the Prince. "If my uncle desires to have the credit of shutting the father's apartment against the son, it will gratify him to know that I am attending in the outer hall like a lackey."

"May it please you," said MacLewis, with hesitation, "if your Highness would consent to retire just now, and to wait a while in patience, I will send to acquaint you when the Duke of Albany goes; and I doubt not that his Majesty will then admit your Grace to his pre-

sence. At present, your Highness must forgive me,—it is impossible you can have access."

"I understand you, MacLewis; but go, nevertheless, and obey my commands."

The officer went accordingly, and returned with a message, that the King was indisposed, and on the point of retiring to his private chamber; but that the Duke of Albany would presently wait upon the Prince of Scotland.

It was, however, a full half hour ere the Duke of Albany appeared,—a period of time which Rothsay spent partly in moody silence, and partly in idle talk with MacLewis and the Brandanes, as the levity or irritability of his temper obtained the ascendant.

At length the Duke came, and with him the Lord High Constable, whose countenance expressed much sorrow and embarrassment.

"Fair kinsman," said the Duke of Albany, "I grieve to say that it is my royal brother's opinion, that it will be best, for the honour of the royal family, that your Royal Highness do restrict yourself for a time to the seclusion of the High Constable's lodgings, and accept of

the noble Earl here present for your principal, if not sole companion, until the scandals which have been this day spread abroad, shall be refuted, or forgotten."

"How is this, my Lord of Errol?" said the Prince, in astonishment. "Is your house to be my jail, and is your lordship to be my jailor?"

"The saints forbid, my lord," said the Earl of Errol; "but it is my unhappy duty to obey the commands of your father, by considering your Royal Highness for some time as being under my ward."

"The Prince—the heir of Scotland, under the ward of the High Constable!—What reason can be given for this? Is the blighting speech of a convicted recreant of strength sufficient to tarnish my royal escutcheon?"

"While such accusations are not refuted and denied, my kinsman," said the Duke of Albany, "they will contaminate that of a monarch."

"Denied, my lord!" exclaimed the Prince; "by whom are they asserted? save by a wretch too infamous, even by his own confession, to be

credited for a moment, though a beggar's character, not a prince's, were impeached.—Fetch him hither,—let the rack be shown to him; you will soon hear him retract the calumny which he dared to assert."

"The gibbet has done its work too surely to leave Bonthron sensible to the rack," said the Duke of Albany. "He has been executed an hour since."

"And why such haste, my lord?" said the Prince; "know you it looks as if there were practice in it, to bring a stain on my name?"

"The custom is universal—the defeated combatant in the ordeal of battle is instantly transferred from the lists to the gallows.—And yet, fair kinsman," continued the Duke of Albany, "if you had boldly and strongly denied the imputation, I would have judged right to keep the wretch alive for further investigation; but as your Highness was silent, I deemed it best to stifle the scandal in the breath of him that uttered it."

"Saint Mary, my lord, but this is too insulting! Do you, my uncle and kinsman, sup-

pose me guilty of prompting such an useless and unworthy action, as that which the slave confessed?"

"It is not for me to bandy questions with your Highness; otherwise I would ask, whether you also mean to deny the scarce less unworthy, though less bloody attack, upon the house in Couvrefew Street?—Be not angry with me, kinsman; but, indeed, your sequestering yourself for some brief space from the court, were it only during the King's residence in this city where so much offence has been given, is imperiously demanded."

Rothsay paused when he heard this exhortation; and looking at the Duke in a very marked manner, replied,—

"Uncle, you are a good huntsman. You have pitched your toils with much skill; but you would have been foiled, notwithstanding, had not the stag rushed among the nets of free will. God speed you, and may you have the profit by this matter which your measures deserve. Say to my father, I obey his arrest.—My Lord High Constable, I wait only your pleasure to

attend you to your lodgings. Since I am to lie in ward, I could not have desired a kinder or more courteous warden."

The interview between the uncle and nephew being thus concluded, the Prince retired with the Earl of Errol to his lodgings; the citizens whom they met in the streets passing to the further side, when they observed the Duke of Rothsay, to escape the necessity of saluting one whom they had been taught to consider as a ferocious as well as unprincipled libertine. The Constable's lodgings received the owner and his princely guest, both glad to leave the streets, yet neither feeling easy in the situation which they occupied with regard to each other within doors.

We must return to the lists after the combat had ceased, and when the nobles had withdrawn. The crowds were now separated into two distinct bodies. That which made the smallest in number, was at the same time the most distinguished for respectability, consisting of the better class of inhabitants of Perth, who were gratulating the successful champion, and

each other, upon the triumphant conclusion to which they had brought their feud with the courtiers. The magistrates were so much elated on the occasion, that they entreated Sir Patrick Charteris's acceptance of a collation in the Town-hall. To this, Henry, the hero of the day, was of course invited, or he was rather commanded to attend. He listened to the summons with great embarrassment, for it may be readily believed his heart was with Catharine Glover. But the advice of Simon Glover decided him. That veteran citizen had a natural and becoming deference for the magistracy of the Fair City, and a high estimation of all honours which flowed from such a source.

"Thou must not think to absent thyself from such a solemn occasion, son Henry," was his advice. "Sir Patrick Charteris is to be there himself, and I think it will be a rare occasion for thee to gain his good-will. It is like he may order of thee a new suit of harness; and I myself heard worthy Bailie Craigdallie say, there was a talk of furbishing up the city's armory.—Thou must not neglect the good trade,

now that thou takest on thee an expensive family."

"Tush, father Glover," answered the embarrassed victor, "I lack no custom—and thou knowest there is Catharine, who may wonder at my absence, and have her ear abused once more by tales of glee-maidens, and I wot not what."

"Fear not for that," said the Glover, "but go, like an obedient burgess, where thy betters desire to have thee. I do not deny that it will cost some trouble to make thy peace with Catharine about this duel; for she thinks herself wiser in such matters than King and Council, Kirk and Canons, Provost and Bailies. But I will take up the quarrel with her myself, and will so work for thee, that though she may receive thee to-morrow with somewhat of a chiding, it shall melt into tears and smiles, like an April morning, that begins with a mild shower. Away with thee then, my son, and be constant to-morrow after morning mass."

The Smith, though reluctantly, was obliged to defer to the reasoning of his proposed father-in-law; and, once determined to accept the ho-

nour destined for him by the fathers of the city, he extricated himself from the crowd, and hastened home to put on his best apparel; in which he presently afterwards repaired to the Council-house, where the ponderous oak table seemed to bend under the massy dishes of choice Tay salmon, and delicious sea-fish from Dundee, being the dainties which the fasting season permitted, whilst neither wine, ale, nor metheglin, were wanting to wash them down. The waits, or minstrels of the burgh, played during the repast, and in the intervals of the music, one of them recited with great emphasis, a long poetical account of the battle of Blackearn-side, fought by Sir William Wallace, and his redoubted captain and friend, Thomas of Longueville, against the English general, Seward—a theme perfectly familiar to all the guests, who, nevertheless, more tolerant than their descendants, listened as if it had all the zest of novelty. It was complimentary to the ancestor of the Knight of Kinfauns doubtless, and to other Perthshire families, in passages which the audience applauded vociferously,

whilst they pledged each other in mighty draughts, to the memory of the heroes who had fought by the side of the Champion of Scotland. The health of Henry Wynd was quaffed with repeated shouts, and the Provost announced publicly, that the magistrates were consulting how they might best invest him with some distinguished privilege, or honorary reward, to show how highly his fellow-citizens valued his courageous exertions.

"Nay, take it not thus, an it like your worships," said the Smith, with his usual blunt manner, "lest men say that valour must be rare in Perth, when they reward a man for fighting for the right of a forlorn widow. I am sure there are many scores of stout burghers in Perth would have done this day's dargue, as well or better than I. For, in good sooth, I ought to have cracked yonder head-piece, like an earthen pipkin—ay, and would have done it too, if it had not been one which I myself tempered for Sir John Ramorny. But an the Fair City think my service of any worth, I will

conceive it far more than acquitted by any aid which you may afford from the Common Good,* to the support of the widow Magdalen and her poor orphans."

"That may well be done," said Sir Patrick Charteris, "and yet leave the Fair City rich enough to pay her debts to Henry Wynd, of which every man of us is a better judge than himself, who is blinded with an unavailing nicety, which men call modesty—And if the burgh be too poor for this, the Provost will bear his share. The Rover's golden angels have not all taken flight yet."

The beakers were now circulated, under the name of a cup of comfort to the widow, and anon flowed around once more to the happy memory of the murdered Oliver, now so bravely avenged. In short, it was a feast so jovial, that all agreed nothing was wanting to render it perfect, but the presence of the Bonnet-ma-

* The public property of the burgh.

ker himself, whose calamity had occasioned the meeting, and who had usually furnished the standing jest at such festive assemblies Had his attendance been possible, it was drily observed by Bailie Craigdallie, he would certainly have claimed the success of the day, and vouched himself the avenger of his own murder.

At the sound of the vesper bell the company broke up, some of the graver sort going to evening prayers, where, with half-shut eyes and shining countenances, they made a most orthodox and edifying portion of a Lenten congregation; others to their own homes, to tell over the occurrences of the fight and feast, for the information of the family circle; and some, doubtless, to the licensed freedoms of some tavern, the door of which Lent did not keep so close shut as the forms of the Church required. Henry returned to the Wynd, warm with the good wine and the applause of his fellow-citizens, and fell asleep to dream of perfect happiness and Catharine Glover.

We have said, that when the combat was decided, the spectators were divided into two bo-

dies. Of these, when the more respectable portion attended the victor in joyous procession, much the greater number, or what might be termed the rabble, waited upon the subdued and sentenced Bonthron, who was travelling in a different direction, and for a very opposite purpose. Whatever may be thought of the comparative attractions of the house of mourning and of feasting under other circumstances, there can be little doubt which will draw most visitors, when the question is, whether we would witness miseries which we are not to share, or festivities of which we are not to partake. Accordingly, the tumbril in which the criminal was conveyed to execution, was attended by far the greater proportion of the inhabitants of Perth.

A friar was seated in the same car with the murderer, to whom he did not hesitate to communicate, under the seal of confession, the same false asseveration which he had made upon the place of combat, which charged the Duke of Rothsay with being director of the ambuscade by which the unfortunate Bonnet-maker

had suffered. The same falsehood he disseminated among the crowd, averring, with unblushing effrontery, to those who were nighest to the car, that he owed his death to his having been willing to execute the Duke of Rothsay's pleasure. For a time he repeated these words, sullenly and doggedly, in the manner of one reciting a task, or a liar who endeavours by reiteration to obtain a credit for his words, which he is internally sensible they do not deserve. But when he lifted up his eyes, and beheld in the distance the black outline of a gallows, at least forty feet high, with its ladder and its fatal cord, rising against the horizon, he became suddenly silent, and the friar could observe that he trembled very much.

"Be comforted, my son," said the good priest, "you have confessed the truth, and received absolution. Your penitence will be accepted according to your sincerity; and though you have been a man of bloody hands and cruel heart, yet, by the Church's prayers, you shall be in due time assoilzied from the penal fires of purgatory."

These assurances were calculated rather to augment than to diminish the terrors of the culprit, who was agitated by doubts whether the mode suggested for his preservation from death would to a certainty be effectual, and some suspicion whether there was really any purpose of employing them in his favour; for he knew his master well enough to be aware of the indifference with which he would sacrifice one, who might on some future occasion be a dangerous evidence against him.

His doom, however, was sealed, and there was no escaping from it. They slowly approached the fatal tree, which was erected on a bank by the river's side, about half a mile from the walls of the city; a site chosen that the body of the wretch, which was to remain food for the carrion crows, might be seen from a distance in every direction. Here the priest delivered Bonthron to the executioner, by whom he was assisted up the ladder, and to all appearance dispatched according to the usual forms of the law. He seemed to struggle for life for a minute, but soon

after hung still and inanimate. The executioner, after remaining upon duty for more than half an hour, as if to permit the last spark of life to be extinguished, announced to the admirers of such spectacles, that the irons for the permanent suspension of the carcass not having been got ready, the concluding ceremony of disembowelling the dead body, and attaching it finally to the gibbet, would be deferred till the next morning at sunrise.

Notwithstanding the early hour which he had named, Master Smotherwell had a reasonable attendance of rabble at the place of execution, to see the final proceedings of justice with its victim. But great was the astonishment and resentment of these amateurs, to find that the dead body had been removed from the gibbet. They were not, however, long at a loss to guess the cause of its disappearance. Bonthron had been the follower of a Baron whose estates lay in Fife, and was himself a native of that province. What was more natural than that some of the Fife men, whose boats were frequently plying

on the river, should have clandestinely removed the body of their countryman from the place of public shame? The crowd vented their rage against Smotherwell, for not completing his job on the preceding evening; and had not he and his assistant betaken themselves to a boat, and escaped across the Tay, they would have run some risk of being pelted to death. The event, however, was too much in the spirit of the times to be much wondered at. Its real cause we shall explain in the next volume.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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